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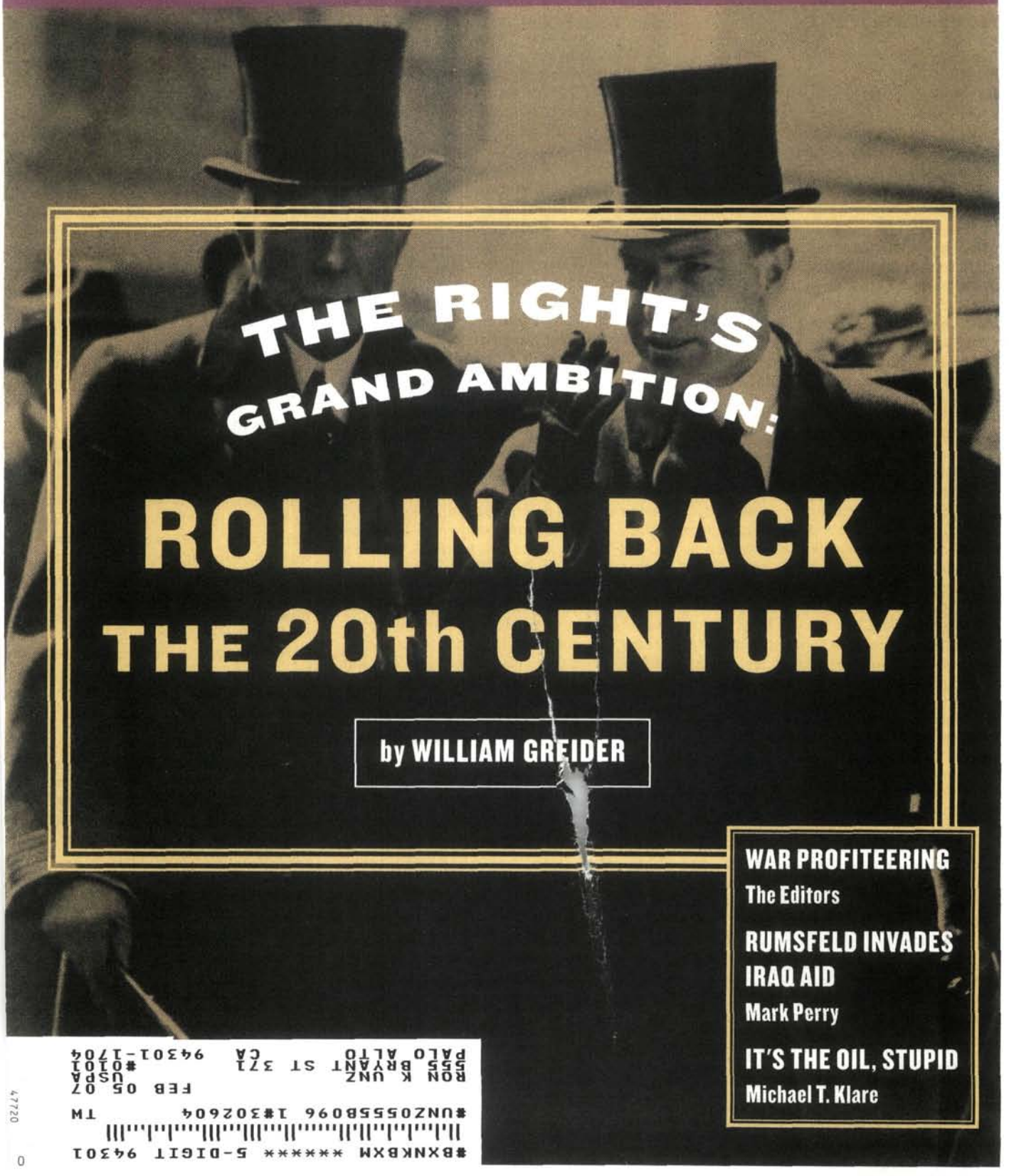

THE RIGHT'S GRAND AMBITION:

ROLLING BACK THE 20th CENTURY

by WILLIAM GREIDER

WAR PROFITEERING
The Editors

RUMSFELD INVADES IRAQ AID
Mark Perry

IT'S THE OIL, STUPID
Michael T. Klare

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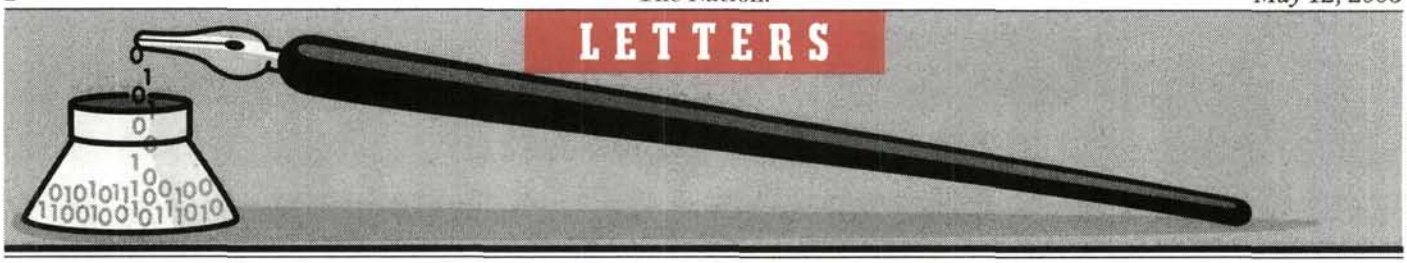

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

PEOPLE POWER PEOPLE

New Paltz, NY

■ "The World's Other Superpower" by Jonathan Schell [April 14] came as a welcome boost to our spirits at this moment of dismay and disbelief at what the American war machine has unleashed on Iraq. I wish I could share Schell's optimism about "people power," but history, unfortunately, does not. Growing up in Germany during the heady years of the Weimar Republic, I witnessed its liberal, progressive, even left-radical majority collapse almost overnight when confronted by armed Nazi goon squads. Faced by the power of brute force, singing, banner-waving, slogan-shouting protesters are no match, even with the Internet. Finally, we grow weary and go home. Is there then no way to confront and possibly defeat the monster? Yes, history is full of precedents, but none are pretty or peaceful. SI LEWEN

Kennesaw, Ga.

■ I oppose Operation Iraqi Fiefdom waged by the Coalition of the Killing, and I understand that defeat of George W. Bush in 2004 is urgent. Such defeat is the only route I see to an America in which I can again take pride. Had Bush run on a platform of alienating US allies, involving us in a series of wars, destroying the environment and further enriching the richest citizens while leaving poor children behind, Al Gore would be our President today. Yet although Bush has implemented all these grim policies, his approval rating hovers around 60 percent, and pundits say he appears unassailable in 2004. What plan of action remains to people who think as I do? How does one influence the beliefs of an electorate whose only standard for a President appears to be likability? JOY A. FARMER

San Francisco

■ "The World's Other Superpower" has made me proud to be an American again—something our President has certainly never done. It made me realize on a fundamental level that this is just as much *my* country as it is for these war-crazed Washington bullies who got us into this horrible murderous nightmare. My father was a World War II veteran. He always said, "Real patriots ask questions"—now I get it! And let us not forget Mark Twain, who said that patriots love their country always and love their government only when it's deserved.
DENNIS HARTNETT

Ooltewah, Tenn.

■ Iraq will be needing a constitution. We could give them ours—it's a great one, but we're not using it anymore. Keep a copy; if we overthrow our own Republican Guard, we'll need it again.
DAVID PATTERSON

THE WAGES OF NAFTA

New York City

■ Tom Hayden's "Seeking a New Globalism in Chiapas" [April 7] is excellent reporting on the pernicious consequences of US-sponsored neoliberalism in Mexico and the growing Latin American resistance to it. During two decades of neoliberal reforms, poverty and inequality in Latin America have increased, as have regional disparities. There has been almost no growth in per capita income since 1980, one of the worst performances in the region's modern history. Forty-four percent of Latin America's 500 million people now live in poverty and nearly 20 percent in extreme poverty.

Moreover, the centerpiece of US neoliberal economic policy, the effort to extend NAFTA to the rest of Latin America in a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), is skeptically viewed as self-serving. While Washington lectures Latin America on the moral and economic virtues of free trade, the Bush Administration has readily jettisoned its principles to protect its constituencies. In addition to imposing new tariffs on imported steel, the 2002 US farm bill approved an 80 percent increase in agricultural subsidies last year, promising over $180 billion to US farmers in the next ten years. US corn now sells in Mexico for 25 percent below cost. In consequence, some 700,000 campesinos and food-processing workers are predicted to be out of work next year. This situation only accelerates immigration to the United States and inflames grassroots anti-neoliberal protest and revolt in these hard-hit rural areas.
ROBERT MATTHEWS
Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies

Ottawa, C[illegible]da

■ Re Tom[illegible]yden on Chiapas: In the introduction to t[illegible] 2002 edition of her classic *Silent Surrender*, Canadian economist Kari Levitt writes: "An international trade specialist once observed that NAFTA is unique because none of the three countries who are party to it believe they have gained. All claim to have lost employment to one or both of the other partners. How can this be when there has been overall economic growth in all three countries? The explanation is that what appears to be an agreement about mutually beneficial trade is in reality an instrument for the redistribution of income from labour to capital—in all three countries."
JORDAN BISHOP

DUBYA & EMINEM: TOGETHER AT LAST

Madison, Wisc.

■ Richard Goldstein's March 24 "Neo–Macho Man: Pop Culture and Post-9/11 Politics" was one of the best articles I've read in *The Nation*. George Bush as Eminem in political drag—now that's a chilling prospect! RON JETTY

Middletown, Calif.

■ Richard Goldstein's excellent essay is right on in all respects but two: It misjudges the motives of both Eminem and the women who like him (me). Yes, Eminem is macho, misogynistic, sadistic and profane. He is, as he tells us over and over, the product of his fatherless underclass culture—and therein lies the message. He looks at his life through the comic-book medium of his art, spewing out every profanity and depravity to which his culture gives rise (which Goldstein quotes and uses against him), followed by the agonized scream, "Don't you want to grow up to be just like me?" Now, that's a conscious and aware wake-up call—even the kids get that the answer is "no."

If Eminem is an "aggrieved man reacting with righteous rage," he should be. And if he scares the rest of us into realizing we have a big problem here, all the better.

Goldstein seems to suggest that women who like Eminem take "guilty pleasure" in being bitch-slapped. That's wack. Eminem is my canary in Ashcroft's PC mineshaft, and I'm singing right alongside him, "F**k you, with the freest of speech these Divided States of Embarrassment will allow me to have!" as I fantasize bitch-slapping Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Ashcroft. Ah, righteous rage and guilty pleasure—the perfect antidote to neo-macho, post-9/11 politics. ANN PREHN

Los Angeles

■ It seems attitude is now an acceptable compensation for intellect. It is becoming increasingly clear that America is the loud, drunk frat-boy at the party that people hang around more out of fear than respect. Being macho has always been linked with being cool. As the American culture of cool seeps into the political arena and as Gen-Xers like myself grow old, the prospect of real intellect and compassion taking over seem more and more grim. The best we can hope for is a Democratic candidate to shave his head, grow a goatee and show some real corporate butt-kicking, social changin' attitude. Till then we're stuck with DJ Dubya and MC Rummy. RICK STEBBINS

Penngrove, Calif.

■ Regarding the 9/11 firefighters, Goldstein says, "Not that the good guys have disappeared. The firefighters who gave their lives in the Twin Towers are heroes of 9/11, as they should be." In all the post-9/11 coverage, dic

(Continued on Page 29)

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EDITORIALS

War Profiteering

Even before US troops arrived in Baghdad, looting broke out—in Washington. While Republicans in Congress and their allies in the media yammered about the need to silence dissent and "support the troops," corporations with close ties to the Bush Administration were quietly arranging to ink lucrative contracts that would put them in charge of reconstructing Iraq. Bechtel's contract, worth up to $680 million, to rebuild Iraqi roads, schools, sewers and hospitals drew a lot of media attention, but it was chump change compared with the deal greased through by Vice President Cheney's old oil-services firm, Halliburton. The Army Corps of Engineers told Representative Henry Waxman that a Pentagon contract awarded without competition to Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR) to fight oilwell fires is worth as much as $7 billion over two years. The Halliburton subsidiary has been authorized to take profits of up to $490 million.

Congress dozes while the treasury is raided. Waxman has done the best job of monitoring the rapidly burgeoning relationship between the federal government run by Dick Cheney and a corporation formerly run by Dick Cheney. He's been asking polite, persistent questions such as, "What is the exact nature of the work that Brown & Root is expected to be asked to perform under the contract?"

But where's the outrage? Where is the leader with the courage to say, as Franklin Roosevelt did during World War II, "I don't want to see a single war millionaire created in the United States as a result of this world disaster"? Democrats in Congress—and Republicans who have not placed their conscience in a blind trust for the duration of the Bush/Cheney years, a group we hope still includes Arizona's John McCain in the Senate and Iowa's Jim Leach in the House—should borrow a page from past wars, when the nation's elected leaders knew what to call businessmen who used hostilities abroad as an excuse to raid the federal treasury. Senator Robert La Follette tagged them as "enemies of democracy in the homeland." During World War II Harry Truman referred to some forms of war profiteering as "treason."

When he heard rumors of such profiteering, Truman got into his Dodge and, during a Congressional recess, drove 30,000 miles paying unannounced visits to corporate offices and worksites. The Senate committee he chaired launched aggressive investigations into shady wartime business practices and found "waste, inefficiency, mismanagement and profiteering," according to Truman, who argued that such behavior was unpatriotic. Urged on by Truman and others in Congress, President Roosevelt supported broad increases in the corporate income tax, raised the excess-profits tax to 90 percent and charged the Office of War Mobilization with the task of eliminating illegal profits. Truman, who became a national hero for his fight against the profiteers, was tapped to be FDR's running mate in 1944.

How about authorizing a contemporary "Truman Committee" to oversee Iraqi war contracts? There's a strong issue here for candidates John Kerry, John Edwards, Joe Lieberman, Bob Graham, Dick Gephardt and all the other Congressional Democrats who would lead their party in 2004 against a President who will be rolling in corporate dough, some of it from companies that profit from war. Voters will respond to a Democrat who is willing to battle the profiteers. Like most Iraqis, most Americans want to see an end to the looting.

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COMMENT

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Rummy Invades Iraq Aid

The telephone call to the headquarters of InterAction—the political arm for more than 160 US-based nongovernmental relief organizations—on the early afternoon of April 17 was not unexpected. InterAction had been told just days before that George W. Bush had made a final decision on which government agency would be coordinating US relief work and distribution of federal aid funds in Iraq. The debate over that question had caused months of consternation among InterAction's "big five" (CARE, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee and World Vision), which had strenuously argued that the State Department, not the Pentagon, be charged with overseeing the Iraq relief effort. On April 3, in a last-ditch attempt to influence Bush, InterAction's members issued a statement saying that the Administration's efforts to "marginalize the State Department and force nongovernmental organizations to operate under DoD jurisdiction complicates our ability to help the Iraqi people and multiplies the dangers faced by relief workers in the field."

According to InterAction officials, the April 3 statement drew "a line in the sand": If the President wanted to make the Pentagon the final arbiter of NGO initiatives, InterAction's members would be forced to withdraw from the US-led relief effort. Their reasons were clear—US military coordination of relief efforts would undermine the impartiality and neutrality of international organizations, placing their workers under suspicion of being an arm of the military. It could cost lives. Aid workers were already under pressure to provide relief in a society that was not yet adequately policed. In early April a relief worker in Afghanistan was murdered. So the big five were adamant. Anything that undermined their independence would be rejected. Then came the April 17 phone call. "We were told that the government disaster and response teams would answer to the US military and not to the State Department," an InterAction staffer says, "and that was that." The big five had to decide whether they should work under the military.

The NGOs decided to acquiesce in US military coordination, take US money and, in the words of this same InterAction official, "just hope for the best." That decision will have enormous consequences—it marks the first time in US history that the military has intervened in civilian relief efforts. "This was a coup, a military coup against civilian control over civilian operations," a leading advocate for a Washington, DC–based human rights organization says. "It is a disastrous decision. It sets a precedent that no one wants to set. These guys [the NGOs] got rolled, and they know it." Joel Charny, a vice president of Refugees International, agrees. "We don't have to worry about that, because we don't take US funding," he says of his organization. "But the big US NGOs with international roots are in a bit of a spot. What this means is that General [Jay] Garner [who heads the Pentagon's Iraq Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance] can decide who gets food and who doesn't. Instead of an objective assessment, which is best done by the State Department or the United Nations, we have a person in charge who has a political past. Even if he is objective, there will inevitably be questions. The NGO community is in real danger of being militarized."

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COMMENT

Officials in the big five admit that the Bush Administration's decision to put the Pentagon in charge of international relief efforts causes problems. But faced with an imminent humanitarian crisis in Iraq, each organization has chosen to emphasize its continued adherence to neutrality and impartiality and hopes that, as one of them said, "the US realizes that the decision they have made has to be reversed." As another big-five official notes, "We had a choice of providing relief under the conditions set for us or letting people get by on their own hook. We decided that our first responsibility was to help people." Charny is skeptical: "A lot of these organizations have international offices that will disagree with the heads of their US divisions. It is one thing to take money from the European Union; it is another thing to operate under the control of a European military force." Peter Gubser, the Washington head of American Near East Refugee Aid says, "You can't go into a country wearing the badge of the US military or any other similar force. It is a bad precedent."

Andy Pugh, the director for policy and advocacy for CARE, disagrees. "We have been upfront and transparent, and we continue to be concerned," he says. "We have always said and we continue to maintain that relief efforts should be coordinated by the US Agency for International Development. And we have been clear about maintaining our principle of independence and impartiality. We are writing programs that will test the Pentagon's good-faith statements that confirm these principles." How has this been working so far? "We are hearing the right messages," Pugh maintains. "But the critics are right about one thing: This is a huge discussion right now in CARE and in other humanitarian organizations. We talk and debate about this every day. We are optimistic. But there are tripwires."

The tripwires will be reached very soon. Within weeks relief organizations will be handing over their assessments of who should get aid and why—and they will develop implementation programs to make certain that happens. If any of these are vetoed by Garner or his aides, one big-five official claims, "There will be a big debate about whether we can continue to work with the military. If they have veto power, then we may have to come home."

Bush's decision that the Pentagon would coordinate Iraqi relief efforts is another chapter in the ongoing debate within the Administration over who runs foreign policy. "Colin Powell argued long and hard about this with Rumsfeld," a senior leader of a US relief operation notes. "He lost the battle—but at least the battle was fought." However, according to a former US commander who oversaw security efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo, where State was in charge of relief efforts, the President's decision was "foreordained." He describes the Bosnia and Kosovo relief initiatives as "complete disasters. There was no coordinating body, no one in charge saying, 'Forget about rehabilitation for now, we need water first.' We had relief supplies we didn't need. We had people building houses for people with no food. There was no prioritization. You need someone on the ground who's in charge. And because there wasn't anyone, the people of Bosnia and Kosovo are still suffering—and all of this gaggle of NGOs are now gone."

NGO officials agree with this assessment, but only partially. "It is true that NGOs go where the action is, but that's what we're supposed to do," Wendy Batson, the head of humanitarian programs for the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, points out. "But to just sit back and assume that relief organizations will take orders from the US military is a bit naïve. We know a lot more about how to provide relief services than anyone in uniform. I can tell you this, long after the military is gone from Iraq international relief organizations will still be on the ground trying to resolve the problems that it caused."

It is not only the NGO community that questions the military's new postwar responsibilities. Privately, but firmly, some military officers are beginning to speak out. "The military has not changed its mind about not getting involved in nation-building, it just looks that way," a senior Pentagon colonel notes bitterly. "This is all Rumsfeld. If he says the UN should be in charge of this, it makes them relevant. If he says the State Department should do this, it makes them relevant. That is just too much for him to swallow."

The war in Iraq cost around 135 American lives. But thousands of Iraqis are dead and thousands more wounded. The nation is a shambles. Its hospitals are understaffed, medicines are in short supply or nonexistent, thousands of children are suffering the consequences of twelve years of sanctions, the landscape is littered with unexploded bombs and looting has emptied the nation's larder. "We have a long way to go, years to go," says Joel Charny. "This thing is not nearly over. The final victory will depend not just on whether we can appeal to the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people but whether we can fill their stomachs. And that battle is just getting under way." MARK PERRY

Mark Perry, a political and military analyst, is the author of Four Stars: The Inside Story of the Forty-Year Battle Between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and America's Civilian Leaders *(Houghton Mifflin).*

It's the Oil, Stupid

On the second day of the invasion of Iraq, US commandos seized two Iraqi offshore oil terminals in the Persian Gulf, capturing their defenders without a fight. "Swooping silently out of the Persian Gulf night," exulted James Dao of the *New York Times*, Navy SEALs claimed "a bloodless victory in the battle for Iraq's vast oil empire."

Dao's dramatic turn of phrase revealed more about the Administration's plans for Iraq than almost every other report from the battlefield. While American forces turned a blind eye to the looting of Iraq's archeological treasures, they moved quickly to gain control over oilfields, refineries and pipelines. Even before Iraqi resistance had been squelched, top US officials were boasting that Iraq's oil infrastructure was safely in American hands.

Oil had nothing to do with Washington's motives for the invasion, we were told. "The only interest the United States has in the region is furthering the cause of peace and stability, not in [Iraq's] ability to generate oil," said press secretary Ari Fleischer in late 2002. But at a January briefing an unnamed "senior Defense official" revealed that Gen. Tommy Franks and his staff "have crafted strategies that will allow us to secure and protect those fields as rapidly as possible in order to preserve those prior to destruction, as opposed to having to go in and clean them up after."

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COMMENT

When pressed, the "senior Defense official" (presumably Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz) claimed that these fields would be protected so as to benefit the Iraqi people "at some point in the future." Other officials spoke of holding the fields "in trust" for the Iraqis. Nonetheless, the White House has talked with US energy companies about assuming a major role in the post-conflict development of Iraq's mammoth reserves.

For now, the Administration's main concern appears to be to put existing oilfields back into operation as rapidly as possible so as to help subsidize the costs of occupying and reconstructing Iraq. To insure that this process will move quickly, the Defense Department awarded a noncompetitive, multimillion-dollar contract to Halliburton, the Houston-based oil-services firm once headed by Dick Cheney to fight fires and repair damage in the oilfields and begin the task of rehabilitation. In coming months other US oil-services firms, including Fluor and Bechtel (both with close ties to the Administration), will be invited to bid for even more lucrative contracts to rebuild Iraq's oil infrastructure. Ultimately, about $5 billion will be needed to restore Iraqi oil production to the levels achieved before the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War.

Managing this complex enterprise will be an "interim authority" made up of Iraqis selected or approved by the US government, presumably including expatriates like Ahmad Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), who enjoys close ties with the CIA and Defense. It can be safely assumed, however, that US occupation officials will retain ultimate authority over the oilfields during this period. Washington will seek United Nations Security Council resolutions lifting the economic sanctions in order to allow sales of Iraqi oil. But Administration officials vow to exclude the UN from decision-making on the disposition of Iraqi oil assets.

Once the fields are back in operation, the next item on the Administration's agenda will be to determine the fate of the Iraqi National Oil Company, the state-owned firm that has managed Iraq's oil assets since their nationalization in the 1970s. Most of INOC's current managers wish to keep the company under state ownership, but some of the exile leaders being courted by the Bush team, including Chalabi, favor privatizing the firm and parceling it out in large pieces to major American and British oil companies. "American companies will have a big shot at Iraqi oil," Chalabi declared in September 2002. This approach was given further support by a meeting of expatriate Iraqi oil officials convened by the State Department in early March. The officials, members of the oil and energy panel of State's Future of Iraq Project, declared that any post-Saddam Iraqi government should "develop the right economic environment to allow investment in and utilization of its oil and gas resources."

American oil firms have admitted to meeting with representatives of the INC and other exile groups to discuss postwar access to Iraqi oil. While exploitation of Iraq's existing fields, with total reserves estimated at 112 billion barrels (second only to Saudi Arabia's holdings of 261 billion barrels) is appealing enough, what US firms *really* want is to be able to tap into Iraq's "virgin" (undeveloped) fields in remote parts of the country.

According to the Energy Department, these undeveloped fields may hold as much as 200 billion barrels of oil, making this the largest pool of unexploited petroleum in the world. Saddam had awarded contracts to firms in Russia, China and France to develop some of these fields, but any government installed by the United States—certainly one headed by Chalabi—would declare those contracts void. With most big fields in the United States and other mature producing areas in decline, access to these reserves could prove essential to the survival and future prosperity of some of the major American energy firms. It is this fact, more than any other, that belies the Administration's claim that oil had nothing to do with the decision to invade and occupy Iraq. MICHAEL T. KLARE

Michael T. Klare, The Nation*'s defense correspondent, is a professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

WARS

(A preventive-war anthem sung to the tune of "Trees," by Joyce Kilmer, with piano accompaniment)

We think that God has never made
A country we should not invade.
Some evil tyrants go unchecked,
And bombing them gets us respect.
The more small countries we destroy
The more respect we can enjoy.

La-da-dee-dee, bomb-bomb.
La-da-dee-dee, bomb-bomb.

And rulers who may seem OK?
It's smart to bomb them anyway,
So others fear us like The Hun.
That Vietnam disease is done.
Our country had it wrong before:
There's nothing better than a war.

Driving While Immigrant

LIBERTIES

Emboldened by the "success" of its preventive war in Iraq, the Bush Administration appears to be expanding its preventive law-enforcement strategy at home. The centerpiece of that strategy is the use of minor infractions as pretexts to lock up suspects on whom the government lacks sufficient evidence to accuse them of more serious crimes. Immigration law violations have been the pretext of choice. The Justice Department has invoked every immigration charge under the sun—including the failure to file a notice of change of address within ten days of moving—to detain and in-

(Continued on Page 30)

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JONATHAN SCHELL

The Governors of Baghdad

In Baghdad this week, one Mohammed Mohsen Zubaidi, an Iraqi businessman with ties to the Iraqi National Congress, has shown up claiming to be the city's governor. He's set up in the Palestine Hotel, where he meets with local leaders, offers to solve their problems and announces plans to get the city's services back on their feet. However, the head of the INC, Ahmad Chalabi, has declined to support Zubaidi's pretensions, and in a recent confrontation between the two and their armed guards, there was accidental gunfire. Chalabi makes no claim to be governor, but he, too, has shown up in Baghdad and started meeting with local leaders, in preparation for an interim government that the United States wants to set up. The United States itself has appeared in the person of Gen. Jay Garner, the intended temporary administrator of all Iraq. He, too, has brought a governor of Baghdad with him: one Barbara Bodine, former Ambassador to Yemen. Just now, it's hard to say which of them, if any, will actually wind up running Baghdad.

Among these pretenders to power, the Garner team has one notable qualification: It represents the occupying power that has just overthrown the former government. The problem has been that the United States has so far declined to act in the classic manner of the conqueror: It has offered no substitute government. Rather, it has come in the guise of a liberator. The normal thing for a conqueror to do once it has routed the indigenous forces is to declare martial law and start giving orders. That is what the United States did on the two occasions most often cited as precedents for the Iraq war—the conquest and occupation of Japan and Germany after the Second World War. The United States made no claim that it was "liberating" those peoples. It conquered them and dictated the forms of their political future, which they, happily, came to accept and approve over time.

The nature of a conqueror's rule has always been well understood. The citizens of the subject population obey because otherwise they can be put to death, just as the soldiers of their defeated army were. The seventeenth-century political philosopher and archrealist Thomas Hobbes had a name for this kind of obedience. Putting to himself the question, "Despotical dominion, how attained?" he answered that it depended on the "consent of the vanquished." He cited the Roman example—highly pertinent in these days of American imperial ambition. The Romans achieved conquest "not by the victory but by the consent of the vanquished." He explained that "it is not...the victory that giveth the right of dominion over the vanquished but his own covenant. Nor is he obliged because he is conquered, that is to say, beaten, and taken, or put to flight; but because he cometh in, and submitteth to the victor." The act that symbolized this consent was the surrender—as in the ceremony on the battleship Missouri when General Umezu signed a surrender agreement with General MacArthur.

This second transaction, the one that turns military victory into conquest, is the one that has not occurred in Iraq. The United States has not demanded—and the Iraqis have not given—any kind of consent. They cometh not in; they submitteth not. Except in the Kurdish north, where Garner was recently received joyously, Iraqis have been telling reporters that while they indeed hated the regime of Saddam Hussein they also do not want to be governed by the United States. Almost with one voice, they say, "No to Saddam, No to Occupation." Or, more disturbingly, "No to America, No to Secular State, Yes to Islamic State."

On the surface, there might appear to be a coincidence of interest here: The Iraqis don't want the United States in Iraq and the United States doesn't want to be there. The rub, of course, is that the United States is not in fact ready to let the Iraqis themselves determine their own future and has published thirteen principles that must guide the formation of Iraq's new government. They include democracy, federalism, respect for women and rejection of "political violence." In the immediate future, the physical reconstruction of the smashed, looted country is a necessity. Many observers judge that these tasks will require many years and the expenditure of many tens of billions of dollars.

Yankee, go home! Yankee, stay! Which will it be? Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's formulation is that the United States will stay as long as is necessary "and not a day longer." But how long is that to be? Six months? Two years? Five years? Twenty?

The question involves much more than timing. It involves fundamental decisions, so far evidently unmade, about the role of the United States not only in Iraq but in the entire Middle East, for which the United States has planned an ambitious political makeover. Questions of governance, indeed, extend far beyond that region. Most permanent members of the Security Council have made clear their conviction that the international interlocutor for any future Iraqi government, interim or permanent, should not be the United States at all, but the United Nations. Nor are the decisions of the Security Council "irrelevant" in the current situation. Although the UN has no troops on the ground in Iraq, it has formal control over Iraq's oil revenues, now under embargo except for the purchase of permitted items, such as food. The embargo will end one way or another—but into whose hands will Iraq's oil revenue be placed? General Garner's? Ahmad Chalabi's? Mohammed Mohsen Zubaidi's?

For events are moving fast. As the outside pretenders to power were jockeying in Baghdad, Iraqis, many of them Shiite Muslims who neither had any connection with the United States nor wanted any, were setting about actually governing large swaths of Iraq, including parts of Baghdad. They were erecting roadblocks, stopping looting, restoring services. For them, as one put it, cooperation with the United States is "accursed"—the mark of the quisling. What if these groups simply go about the business of organizing their country independently of Garner, or in defiance of him? And what if, further, they choose not the sole superpower but the United Nations as their link with the world? In that case, Garner and the country he represents will face a decision: whether to withdraw or try to do what conquerors in the past have always done: impose their will on the conquered people by force.

Jonathan Schell is the author of the just-published The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People *(Metropolitan).*

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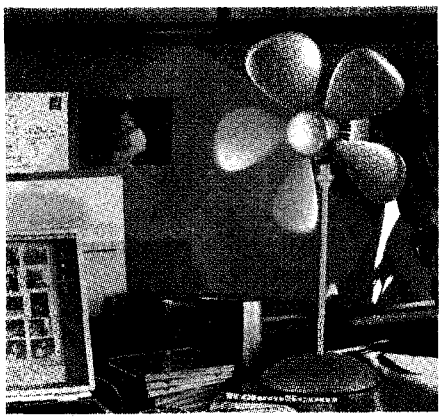

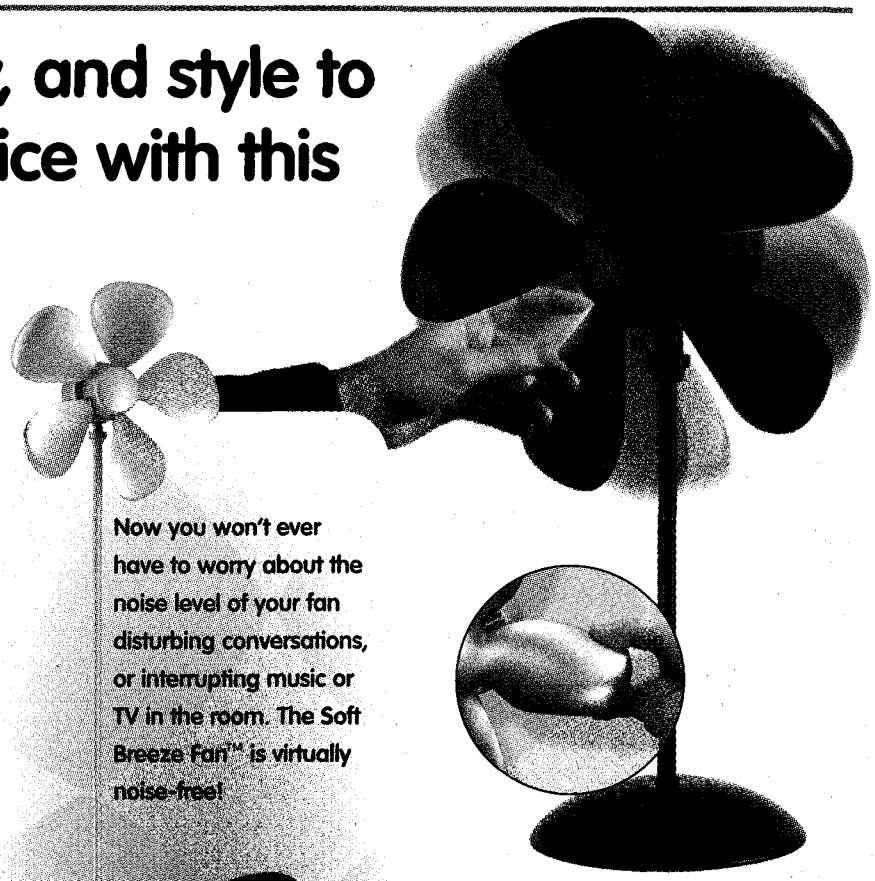

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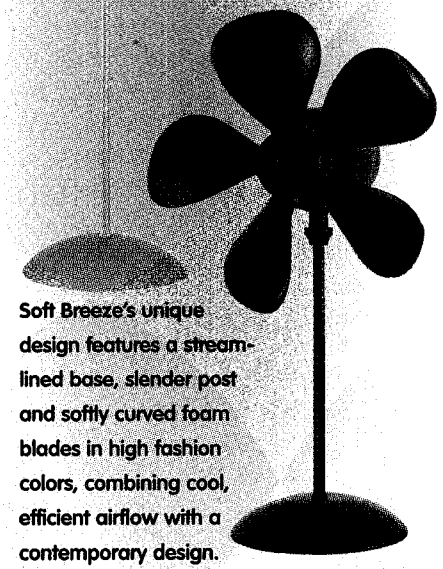

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The Decline and Fall of American Journalism

As a million Shiite pilgrims streamed toward Karbala shouting, "No to America, no to Saddam, no to tyranny, no to Israel!" can't you just imagine the plash of complacent I Told Him So's from the lips of George Bush Sr., on the phone to Brent Scowcroft and other members of the old gang? Bush Sr.'s Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger recently took audible pleasure in telling the BBC that "if George Bush [Jr.] decided he was going to turn the troops loose on Syria and Iran after that he would last in office for about fifteen minutes. In fact if President Bush were to try that now even I would think that he ought to be impeached. You can't get away with that sort of thing in this democracy."

Until Judith Miller's piece showed up on the front page of the *New York Times* on April 21, I'd thought the distillation of disingenuous US press coverage of the invasion came with the images of Iraqis cheering US troops in the Baghdad square in front of the Palestine Hotel on April 9 as they hauled down Saddam's statue.

Remember, the photos of the statue going down, the flag on Saddam's face, the cheering Iraqis, were billed as the images that showed It Was All Worthwhile, up there in the pantheon with Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the raising of the US flag on Iwo Jima and the news film of the Berlin wall going down.

Obviously, there were plenty of Iraqis delighted at the realization that the Age of Saddam was drawing to a close (though it turns out Baghdad will probably be run by the same cops, the same bureaucrats, the same torturers, all now proclaiming their fealty to the free market). And probably there were some Iraqis prepared to wave at Saddam's conquerors riding in on their tanks.

All the same, the clamorous masses in the square never existed. I've yet to see the full image reproduced in any mainstream US newspaper, but I have seen photographs on the web of the entire square when that statue was being pulled down.

In one small portion of the square, itself sealed off by three US tanks, there's a knot of maybe 150 people. Close-up photographs suggest that the active non-US participants were associates of Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, the exile group that rode in on the back of those US tanks. (Go to www.counterpunch.org/statue.html and see for yourself.)

So here, concocted by Pentagon or CIA news managers, we had a virtual demo in front of the Palestine Hotel, where the international press was housed. The "event" was obviously a huge political plus for the Bush Administration and gave Americans back home the false tidings that their troops were being greeted as liberators. Predictably, the media were somewhat coy in offering the news, soon thereafter, that US troops had shot at least ten in a crowd in Mosul that shook their fists instead of offering flowers. Promote a lie, and soon enough that lie comes home to roost.

The days passed, and each excited bellow of discovery of WMD caches on the road north from Kuwait yielded to disappointment. Then came Judith Miller's story in the *New York Times*. The smoking gun at last!

Not exactly, as we shall see. But first a word about the reporter. If ever someone has an institutional interest in finding WMD in Iraq it's surely Miller, who down the years has established a corner in creaking Tales of Terrorism, most of them bottle-fed to her by Israeli and US intelligence. It was Miller who served up Khidir Hamza, the self-proclaimed nuclear bomb maker for Saddam, later exposed as a fraud. It was Miller who last year whipped up an amazing confection in the *Times*, blind-sourced from top to toe, about a Russian biowar scientist (sounding suspiciously like Lotte Lenya in *From Russia With Love*, and since deceased) ferrying Russian smallpox to Saddam.

At least the *Times*'s headline writer tried to keep it honest this time. "Illicit Arms Kept Till Eve of War, an Iraqi Scientist Is Said to Assert." What did who say and who did the asserting? It turns out that Miller, in bed with the entire 101st Airborne, was told by "American weapons experts" in a group called MET Alpha that they have been talking to "a scientist who claims to have worked in Iraq's chemical weapons program," that the Iraqis destroyed chemical weapons days before the war and that "Iraq had secretly sent unconventional weapons and technology to Syria, starting in the mid-1990's, and that more recently Iraq was cooperating with Al Qaeda." Now isn't that just what you'd expect him to say?

Miller does concede that the MET Alpha group would not tell her who the scientist was and would not allow her to question him (assuming it wasn't a "her," maybe Lotte Lenya in a later incarnation) or do anything more than look at him from a great distance as he stood next to what was billed to Miller as a dump for "precursors" for chemical weapons (come to think about it, it's probably a recycling facility for used cans of Roundup). Furthermore, she wasn't allowed to write about the discovery of the unnamed Iraqi scientist for three days, and even then US military censors went over her copy line by line.

What convenient disclosures this Iraqi allegedly offers, tailor-made to buttress Rumsfeld's fist-shaking at Syria and Bush and Powell's claims that Saddam and Osama bin Laden worked hand in glove, a claim that depended originally on an article by Jeffrey Goldberg in *The New Yorker* last year.

At least Goldberg talked to the man claiming Osama/Saddam ties, although he made no effort to check the man's "evidence," subsequently discredited by less gullible journalists. With Miller we sink to the level of straight press handout. I guess Miller, who's apparently writing a sequel to her last book, on bioterror, needs to stay on the good side of MET Alpha. That's the problem with embedfellows. Just one kiss is all it takes. And talking of embedfellows, I can't imagine Laura Bush is too happy about Iraq's national library being torched, even if the prime loss was a bunch of manuscript Korans. And what good Christian would care about them? As the joke went around the Pentagon after Franklin Graham held Good Friday services in the chapel normally used by the DoD's Muslims, the scratches Graham found in the floor were the Devil's fingernails. ■

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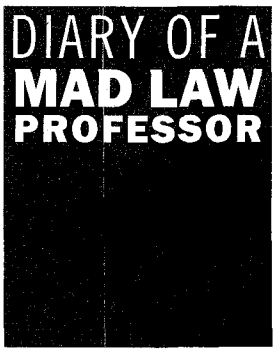
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

New America



Over dinner recently, a friend of mine mused that "at least it's not as bad as the McCarthy era." Perhaps not. But granted that the war against terrorism presents challenges whose form we have not confronted before, the level of secrecy and aversion to rules of both domestic and international law is troubling. Here's more in the ever-growing list of my concerns about what is happening to our nation.

1. Whose idea was it to make a deck of bad-guy *playing* cards, of all things? If what Gen. Vincent Brooks says is literally true—that those pictured are to be "pursued, killed or captured"—then this "collectible" deck is little more than a gussied-up hit list. As such, the poker-styled playfulness trivializes what those with no sense of humor might carelessly interpret as our own home-grown fatwa. It is chilling, hearing commentators speak not of Saddam Hussein's death, but of "taking out the ace of spades."

2. We must be concerned that Iraqi military casualties are still unaccounted for. One hears estimates of 7,000 Iraqi prisoners of war, 1,800 civilian casualties. But there is not even a rough guess of the number of deaths of soldiers or Republican Guard or paramilitaries or fedayeen or armed villagers. If we speak of "acceptably low" casualties for our side, must not we think about what would be an "unacceptably high" toll on the other? a hundred? a thousand? a million? We wanted to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Given the extraordinary superiority of our military force, does not morality demand that we ourselves not wreak massive destruction, massive injury, massive loss of life? We must know these things.

3. There must be some greater public debate about this new doctrine of "pre-emptive" war. It licenses unprecedented global adventurism. Yet discussion of it seems stymied by the Bush Administration's rather skillful employ of the rhetoric of displaced agency. The war was repeatedly described as "Saddam's choice." Saddam left us "no option." This is the moral equivalent of saying, "The devil made me do it." The truth is, we chose to invade after a good bit of forethought, not under the threat of immediate attack. Whether one thinks this lowered standard is good or bad, we must not fool ourselves into thinking we were passive. We must take full responsibility for our role as agents and instigators.

4. Everywhere, it seems, there are unexplained disappearances and detentions. This week I'm in Indiana, where an item in the Bloomington *Herald-Times* reads, "One of our students brought us this disturbing news: her father, a naturalized American citizen from India, had disappeared from the New York airport upon his return from a business trip to Germany. It was verified that he was on the flight and his luggage showed up at the family home a few days later.... After frantic calls to hospitals, police, relatives, even the FBI, the family hired a lawyer." Almost a week later, the FBI admitted that they had him; and after three weeks and the intervention of the Indian Ambassador to the United States, the father, a prominent advertising executive, was ultimately released. There were no charges and, still, no explanation.

5. According to a report in *Business Week*, "Since September 11, various federal agencies, including the State Dept., Customs Service, and FBI, have created lists of suspicious travelers, Americans and foreigners. All told, some 13 million people (equivalent to 4.5% of the U.S. population) are now on the terror watch list. Security experts and common sense say 99% of those pinpointed aren't terrorists." One wonders what criteria they're using. National Public Radio reported recently that police in Colorado classified the American Friends Service Committee as a "criminal extremist organization."

6. Heard the one about Massachusetts proposing to charge antiwar protesters for the costs of the police's time in arresting them? Or the proposal to charge a fee of up to $125 in order to file a claim with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination? Sounds goofy? Welcome to the privatization of the freedom train. Welcome to our new, wholly corporate world, in which one pays for entry into free-speech spaces or discrimination-free zones, in which domestic civil rights are reconceived not as inalienable, but more like the perks of going first class on the Acela Express.

7. I am tired of the panopticon. After my last trip, I found a little notice at the very bottom of my suitcase. It said that my luggage had been searched "for your protection" and that if I had any questions I could call a toll-free number. I do wonder where my night lights have gone. Two rather nice little night lights have been taken from my luggage on two separate occasions, and I can't quite figure out why. Perhaps night lights were added to the list of dangerous objects. Perhaps it's a fetish of Big Brother's. I guess it's not worth pursuing. But those unseen hands. At the bottom of my suitcase...

8. I want to know what's happening to us behind the wall of this war. I want more focus on the collapsing economy that is driving us to such lengths as Mayor Bloomberg's suing Mongolia for back taxes in order to fund New York City's public schools. And I wish we could turn to other pressing issues: Many people will miss seeing a marvelously intelligent documentary, *Race—The Power of an Illusion* (I must disclose that I had a small advisory role). The broadcast has been scheduled for three Thursdays: April 24, May 1 and May 8 on PBS, to very little publicity. It was supposed to have been widely reviewed, including a spread in *Newsweek*, but many of the reviews were shelved to make room for more war coverage. I recommend it just now because it documents the invention of race as the slow historical metastasizing of pseudoscientific miscategorization, careless brutality and fear. It is a timely reminder that social divisions are made, not inevitable. If you miss it, information about distribution may be obtained through California Newsreel, www.newsreel.org. ■

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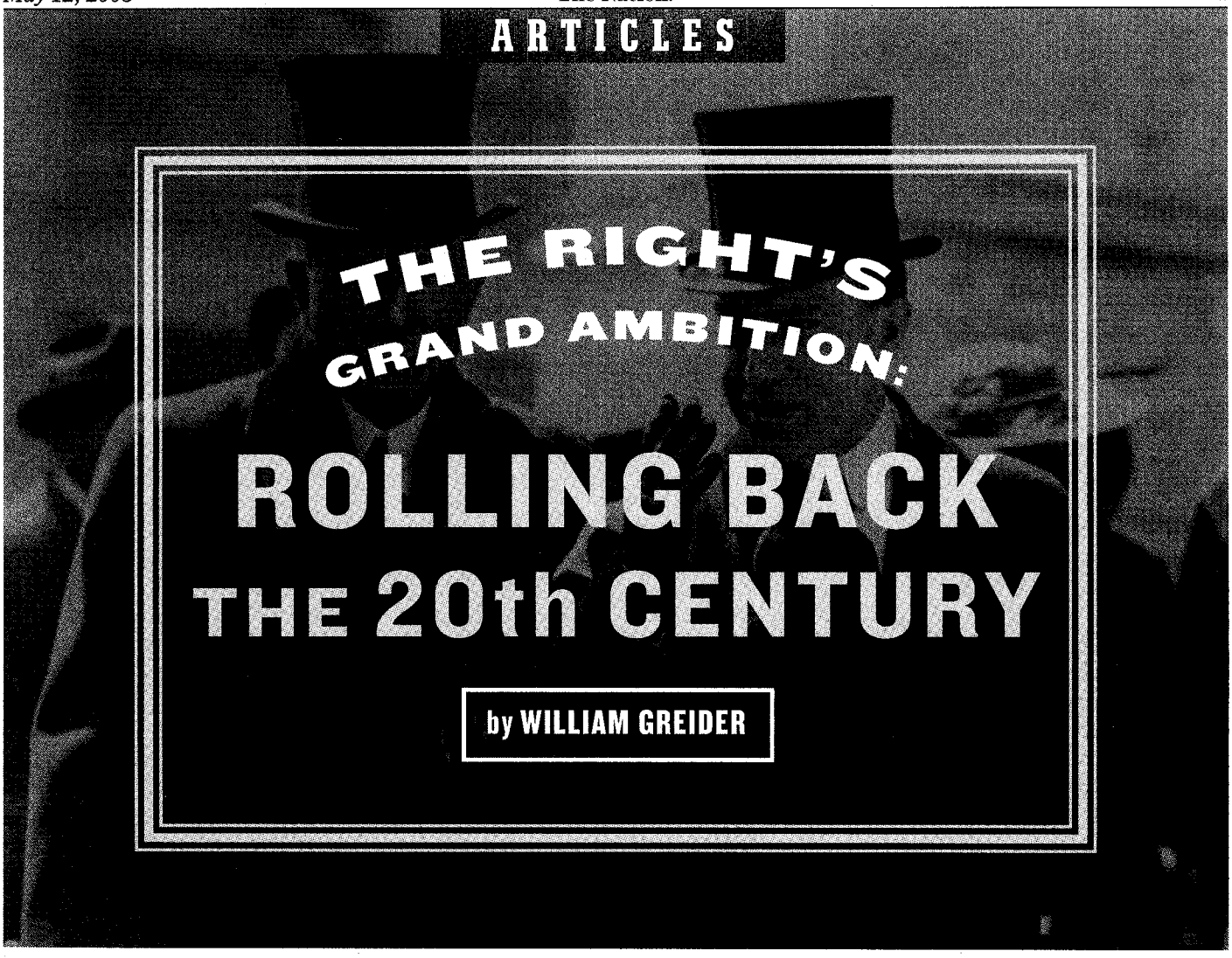

THE RIGHT'S GRAND AMBITION: ROLLING BACK THE 20th CENTURY

by WILLIAM GREIDER

I. Back to the Future

George W. Bush, properly understood, represents the third and most powerful wave in the right's long-running assault on the governing order created by twentieth-century liberalism. The first wave was Ronald Reagan, whose election in 1980 allowed movement conservatives finally to attain governing power (their flame was first lit by Barry Goldwater back in 1964). Reagan unfurled many bold ideological banners for right-wing reform and established the political viability of enacting regressive tax cuts, but he accomplished very little reordering of government, much less shrinking of it. The second wave was Newt Gingrich, whose capture of the House majority in 1994 gave Republicans control of Congress for the first time in two generations. Despite some landmark victories like welfare reform, Gingrich flamed out quickly, a zealous revolutionary ineffective as legislative leader.

George Bush II may be as shallow as he appears, but his presidency represents a far more formidable challenge than either Reagan or Gingrich. His potential does not emanate from an amiable personality (Al Gore, remember, outpolled him in 2000) or even the sky-high ratings generated by 9/11 and war. Bush's governing strength is anchored in the long, hard-driving movement of the right that now owns all three branches of the federal government. Its unified ranks allow him to govern aggressively, despite slender GOP majorities in the House and Senate and the public's general indifference to the right's domestic program.

The movement's grand ambition—one can no longer say grandiose—is to roll back the twentieth century, quite literally. That is, defenestrate the federal government and reduce its scale and powers to a level well below what it was before the New Deal's centralization. With that accomplished, movement conservatives envision a restored society in which the prevailing values and power relationships resemble the America that existed around 1900, when William McKinley was President. Governing authority and resources are dispersed from Washington, returned to local levels and also to individuals and private institutions, most notably corporations and religious organizations. The primacy of private property rights is re-established over the shared public priorities expressed in government regulation. Above all, private wealth—both enterprises and individuals with higher incomes—are permanently insulated from the progressive claims of the graduated income tax.

These broad objectives may sound reactionary and destructive (in historical terms they are), but hard-right conservatives see themselves as liberating reformers, not destroyers, who are rescuing old American virtues of self-reliance and individual autonomy from the clutches of collective action and "statist" left-wingers. They do not expect any of these far-reaching goals to be fulfilled during Bush's tenure, but they do assume that history is on their

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side and that the next wave will come along soon (not an unreasonable expectation, given their great gains during the past thirty years). Right-wingers—who once seemed frothy and fratricidal—now understand that three steps forward, two steps back still adds up to forward progress. It's a long march, they say. Stick together, because we are winning.

Many opponents and critics (myself included) have found the right's historic vision so improbable that we tend to guffaw and misjudge the political potency of what it has put together. We might ask ourselves: If these ideas are so self-evidently cockeyed and reactionary, why do they keep advancing? The right's unifying idea—get the government out of our lives—has broad popular appeal, at least on a sentimental level, because it represents an authentic core value in the American experience ("Don't tread on me" was a slogan in the Revolution). But the true source of its strength is the movement's fluid architecture and durability over time, not the passing personalities of Reagan-Gingrich-Bush or even the big money from business. The movement has a substantial base that believes in its ideological vision—people alarmed by cultural change or injured in some way by government intrusions, coupled with economic interests that have very strong reasons to get government off their backs—and the right has created the political mechanics that allow these disparate elements to pull together. Cosmopolitan corporate executives hold their noses and go along with Christian activists trying to stamp out "decadent" liberal culture. Fed-up working-class conservatives support business's assaults on their common enemy, liberal government, even though they may be personally injured when business objectives triumph.

The right's unifying idea—get government out of our lives—represents an authentic core value in the American experience.

The right's power also feeds off the general decay in the political system—the widely shared and often justifiable resentments felt toward big government, which no longer seems to address the common concerns of ordinary citizens.

I am not predicting that the right will win the governing majority that could enact the whole program, in a kind of right-wing New Deal—and I will get to some reasons why I expect their cause to fail eventually. The farther they advance, however, the less inevitable is their failure.

II. The McKinley Blueprint

In the months after last November's elections, the Bush Administration rattled progressive sensibilities with shock and awe on the home front—a barrage of audacious policy initiatives: Allow churches to include sanctuaries of worship in buildings financed by federal housing grants. Slash hundreds of billions in domestic programs, especially spending for the poor, even as the Bush tax cuts kick in for the well-to-do. At the behest of Big Pharma, begin prosecuting those who help the elderly buy cheaper prescription drugs in Canada. Compel the District of Columbia to conduct federally financed school voucher experiments (even though DC residents are overwhelmingly opposed). Reform Medicaid by handing it over to state governments, which will be free to make their own rules, much like welfare reform. Do the same for housing aid, food stamps and other long-established programs. Redefine "wetlands" and "wilderness" so that millions of protected acres are opened for development.

Liberal activists gasped at the variety and dangerous implications (the public might have been upset too but was preoccupied with war), while conservatives understood that Bush was laying the foundations, step by step, toward their grand transformation of American life. These are the concrete elements of their vision:

§ Eliminate federal taxation of private capital, as the essential predicate for dismantling the progressive income tax. This will require a series of reform measures (one of them, repeal of the estate tax, already accomplished). Bush has proposed several others: elimination of the tax on stock dividends and establishment of new tax-sheltered personal savings accounts for the growing "investor class." Congress appears unwilling to swallow these, at least this year, but their introduction advances the education-agitation process. Future revenue would be harvested from a single-rate flat tax on wages or, better still, a stiff sales tax on consumption. Either way, labor gets taxed, but not capital. The 2003 Economic Report of the President, prepared by the Council of Economic Advisers, offers a primer on the advantages of a consumption tax and how it might work. Narrowing the tax base naturally encourages smaller government.

§ Gradually phase out the pension-fund retirement system as we know it, starting with Social Security privatization but moving eventually to breaking up the other large pools of retirement savings, even huge public-employee funds, and converting them into individualized accounts. Individuals will be rewarded for taking personal responsibility for their retirement with proposed "lifetime savings" accounts where capital is stored, forever tax-exempt. Unlike IRAs, which provide a tax deduction for contributions, wages are taxed upfront but permanently tax-sheltered when deposited as "lifetime" capital savings, including when the money is withdrawn and spent. Thus this new format inevitably threatens the present system, in which employers get a tax deduction for financing pension funds for their workers. The new alternative should eventually lead to repeal of the corporate tax deduction and thus relieve business enterprise of any incentive to finance pensions for employees. Everyone takes care of himself.

§ Withdraw the federal government from a direct role in housing, healthcare, assistance to the poor and many other long-established social priorities, first by dispersing program management to local and state governments or private operators, then by steadily paring down the federal government's financial commitment. If states choose to kill an aid program rather than pay for it themselves, that confirms that the program will not be missed. Any slack can be taken up by the private sector, philanthropy and especially religious institutions that teach social values grounded in faith.

§ Restore churches, families and private education to a more influential role in the nation's cultural life by giving them a significant new base of income—public money. When "school choice" tuitions are fully available to families, all taxpayers will be compelled to help pay for private school systems, both secular and religious, including Catholic parochial schools. As a result, public schools will likely lose some of their financial support, but their

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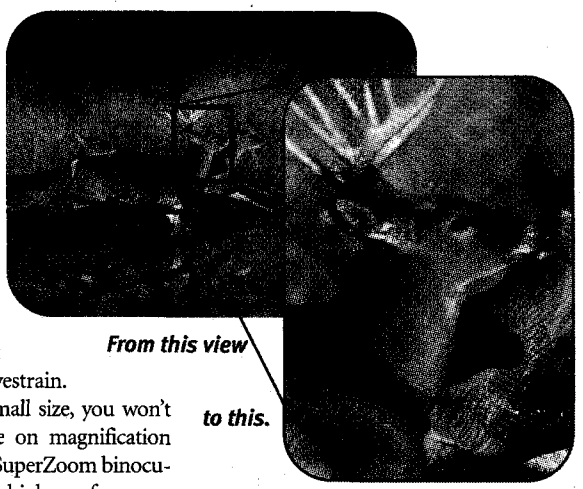

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enrollments are expected to shrink anyway, as some families opt out. Although the core of Bush's "faith-based initiative" stalled in Congress, he is advancing it through new administrative rules. The voucher strategy faces many political hurdles, but the Supreme Court is out ahead, clearing away the constitutional objections.

§ Strengthen the hand of business enterprise against burdensome regulatory obligations, especially environmental protection, by introducing voluntary goals and "market-driven" solutions. These will locate the decision-making on how much progress is achievable within corporate managements rather than enforcement agencies (an approach also championed in this year's Economic Report). Down the road, when a more aggressive right-wing majority is secured for the Supreme Court, conservatives expect to throw a permanent collar around the regulatory state by enshrining a radical new constitutional doctrine. It would require government to compensate private property owners, including businesses, for new regulations that impose costs on them or injure their profitability, a formulation sure to guarantee far fewer regulations [see Greider, "The Right and US Trade Law," October 15, 2001].

The McKinley era represents a lost Eden the right has set out to restore—before Teddy Roosevelt, 'when the socialists took over.'

§ Smash organized labor. Though unions have lost considerable influence, they remain a major obstacle to achieving the right's vision. Public-employee unions are formidable opponents on issues like privatization and school vouchers. Even the declining industrial unions still have the resources to mobilize a meaningful counterforce in politics. Above all, the labor movement embodies the progressives' instrument of power: collective action. The mobilizations of citizens in behalf of broad social demands are inimical to the right's vision of autonomous individuals, in charge of their own affairs and acting alone. Unions may be taken down by a thousand small cuts, like stripping "homeland security" workers of union protection. They will be more gravely weakened if pension funds, an enduring locus of labor power, are privatized.

Looking back over this list, one sees many of the old peevish conservative resentments—Social Security, the income tax, regulation of business, labor unions, big government centralized in Washington—that represent the great battles that conservatives lost during early decades of the twentieth century. That is why the McKinley era represents a lost Eden the right has set out to restore. Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform and a pivotal leader in the movement's inside-outside politics, confirms this observation. "Yes, the McKinley era, absent the protectionism," he agrees, is the goal. "You're looking at the history of the country for the first 120 years, up until Teddy Roosevelt, when the socialists took over. The income tax, the death tax, regulation, all that." (In foreign policy, at least, the Bush Administration could fairly be said to have already restored the spirit of that earlier age. Justifying the annexation of the Philippines, McKinley famously explained America's purpose in the world: "There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died.")

But the right employs a highly selective memory. McKinley Republicans, aligned with the newly emergent industrial titans, did indeed hold off the Progressive advocates of a federal income tax and other reforms, while its high tariffs were the equivalent of a stiff consumption tax. And its conservative Supreme Court blocked regulatory laws designed to protect society and workers as unconstitutional intrusions on private property rights.

But the truth is that McKinley's conservatism broke down not because of socialists but because a deeply troubled nation was awash in social and economic conflicts, inequities generated by industrialization and the awesome power consolidating in the behemoth industrial corporations (struggles not resolved until economic crisis spawned the New Deal). Reacting to popular demands, Teddy Roosevelt enacted landmark Progressive reforms like the first federal regulations protecting public health and safety and a ban on corporate campaign contributions. Both Roosevelt and his successor, Republican William Howard Taft, endorsed the concept of a progressive income tax and other un-Republican measures later enacted under Woodrow Wilson.

George W. Bush does not of course ever speak of the glories of the McKinley era or acknowledge his party's retrograde objectives (Ari Fleischer would bat down any suggestions to the contrary). Conservatives learned, especially from Gingrich's implosion, to avoid flamboyant ideological proclamations. Instead, the broader outlines are only hinted at in various official texts. But there's nothing really secretive about their intentions. Right-wing activists and think tanks have been openly articulating the goals for years. Some of their ideas that once sounded loopy are now law.

III. The Ecumenical Right

The movement "is moving with the speed of a glacier," explains Martin Anderson, a senior fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution who served as Reagan's house intellectual, the keeper of the flame, and was among the early academics counseling George W. Bush. "It moves very slowly, stops sometimes, even retreats, but then it moves forward again. Sometimes, it comes up against a tree and seems stuck, then the tree snaps and people say, 'My gosh, it's a revolution.'" To continue the metaphor, Anderson thinks this glacier will run up against some big boulders that do not yield, that the right will eventually be stopped short of grand objectives like small government or elimination of the income tax. But they've made impressive progress so far.

For the first time since the 1920s, Congress, the White House and the Supreme Court are all singing from same hymnal and generally reinforcing one another. The Court's right-wing majority acts to shrink federal authority, block citizen challenges of important institutions and hack away at the liberal precedents on civil rights, regulatory law and many other matters (it even decides an election for its side, when necessary).

Bush, meanwhile, has what Reagan lacked—a Reaganite majority in Congress. When the Gipper won in 1980, most Republicans in Congress were still traditional conservatives, not radical reformers. The majority of House Republicans tipped over to the Reaganite identity in 1984, a majority of GOP senators not until 1994. The ranks of the unconverted—Republicans who refuse to

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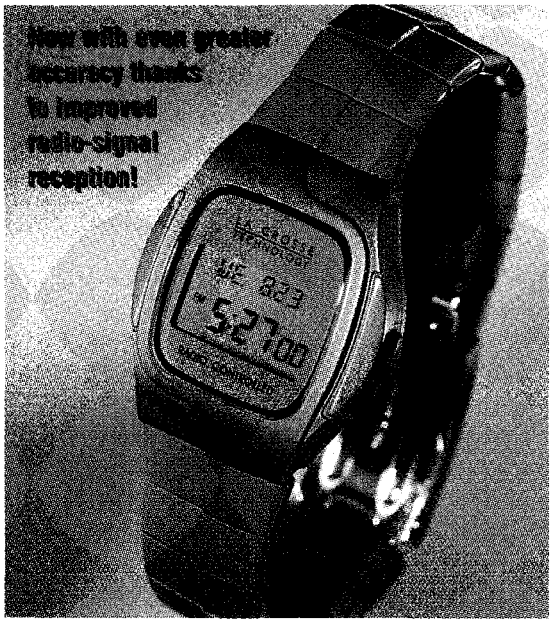

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sign Norquist's pledge not to raise taxes—are now, by his count, down to 5 percent in the House caucus, 15 percent in the Senate.

This ideological solidarity is a central element in Bush's governing strength. So long as he can manage the flow of issues in accord with the big blueprint, the right doesn't shoot at him when he makes politically sensitive deviations (import quotas for steel or the lavish new farm-subsidy bill). It also helps that, especially in the House, the GOP leaders impose Stalinist discipline on their troops. Bush also reassures the far right by making it clear that he is one of them. Reagan used to stroke the Christian right with strong rhetoric on social issues but gave them very little else (the man was from Hollywood, after all). Bush is a true believer, a devout Christian and exceedingly public about it. Bush's principal innovation—a page taken from Bill Clinton's playbook—is to confuse the opposition's issues by offering his own compassion-lite alternatives, co-opting or smothering Democratic initiatives. Unlike Clinton, Bush does not mollify his political base with empty gestures. Their program is his program.

Ideology may be the unifying umbrella, but the glue of the movement is delivering concrete rewards—usually money—to constituencies.

"Reagan talked a good game on the domestic side but he actually didn't push for much," says Paul Weyrich, leader of the Free Congress Foundation and a movement pioneer. "Likewise, the Gingrich era was a lot of rhetoric. This Administration is far more serious and disciplined.... they have better outreach than any with which I have dealt. These people have figured out how to communicate regularly with their base, make sure it understands what they're doing. When they have to go against their base, they know how to inoculate themselves against what might happen."

Norquist's ambition is that building on its current strength, the right can cut government by half over the next twenty-five years to "get it down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub" [see Robert Dreyfuss, "Grover Norquist: 'Field Marshal' of the Bush Tax Plan," May 14, 2001]. The federal government would shrink from 20 percent of GDP to 10 percent, state and local government from 12 to 6 percent. When vouchers become universally available, he expects public schools to shrink from 6 to 3 percent of GDP. "And we'll have better schools," he assures. People like Norquist play the role of constantly pushing the boundaries of the possible. "I'm lining up support to abolish the alternative minimum tax," he says. "Has Bush spoken to this? No. I want to run ahead, put our guys on the record for it. So I will be out in front of the Bush Administration, not attacking the Bush Administration. Will he do everything we want? No, but you know what? I don't care."

Americans for Tax Reform serves as a kind of "action central" for a galaxy of conservative interests, with support from corporate names like Microsoft, Pfizer, AOL Time Warner, R.J. Reynolds and the liquor industry. "The issue that brings people to politics is what they want from government," Norquist explains. "All our people want to be left alone by government. To be in this coalition, you only need to have your foot in the circle on one issue. You don't need a *Weltanschauung*, you don't have to agree with every other issue, so long as the coalition is right on yours. That's why we don't have the expected war within the center-right coalition. That's why we can win."

One of the right's political accomplishments is bringing together diverse, once-hostile sectarians. "The Republican Party used to be based in the Protestant mainline and aggressively kept its distance from other religions," Norquist observes. "Now we've got observant Catholics, the people who go to mass every Sunday, evangelical Christians, Mormons, orthodox Jews, Muslims." How did it happen? "The secular left has created an ecumenical right," he says. This new tolerance, including on race, may represent meaningful social change, but of course the right also still feeds on intolerance too, demonizing those whose values or lifestyle or place of birth does not conform to their idea of "American."

This tendency, Norquist acknowledges, is a vulnerability. The swelling ranks of Latino and Asian immigrants could become a transforming force in American politics, once these millions of new citizens become confident enough to participate in election politics (just as European immigrants became a vital force for liberal reform in the early twentieth century). So Bush labors to change the party's anti-immigrant profile (and had some success with Mexican-Americans in Texas).

Norquist prefers to focus on other demographic trends that he believes insure the right's eventual triumph: As the children of the New Deal die off, he asserts, they will be replaced by young "leave me alone" conservatives. Anderson, the former Reagan adviser, is less certain. "Most of the people like what government is doing," he observes. "So long as it isn't overintrusive and so forth, they're happy with it."

IV. Show Me the Money

Ideology may provide the unifying umbrella, but the real glue of this movement is its iron rule for practical politics: Every measure it enacts, every half-step it takes toward the grand vision, must deliver concrete rewards to one constituency or another, often several—and right now, not in the distant future. Usually the reward is money. There is nothing unusual or illegitimate about that, but it sounds like raw hypocrisy considering that the right devotes enormous energy to denouncing "special-interest politics" on the left (schoolteachers, labor unions, bureaucrats, Hollywood). The right's interest groups, issue by issue, bring their muscle to the cause. Bush's "lifetime savings" accounts constitute a vast new product line for the securities industry, which is naturally enthused about marketing and managing these accounts. The terms especially benefit the well-to-do, since a family of four will be able to shelter up to $45,000 annually (that's more than most families earn in a year). The White House has enlisted Fortune 500 companies to spread the good news to the investor class in their regular mailings to shareholders.

Bush's "market-friendly" reforms for healthcare would reward two business sectors that many consumers regard as the problem—drug companies and HMOs. Big Pharma would get the best of all worlds: a federal subsidy for prescription drug purchases by the elderly, but without any limits on the prices. The insurance industry is invited to set up a privatized version of Medicare that would compete with the government-run system (assuming there are enough senior citizens willing to take that risk).

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Some rewards are not about money. Bush has already provided a victory for "pro-lifers" with the ban on late-term abortions. The antiabortionists are realists now and no longer badger the GOP for a constitutional amendment, but perhaps a future Supreme Court, top-heavy with right-wing appointees, will deliver for them. Republicans are spoiling for a fight over guns in 2004, when the federal ban on assault rifles is due to expire. Liberals, they hope, will try to renew the law so the GOP can deliver a visible election-year reward by blocking it. (Gun-control advocates are thinking of forcing Bush to choose between the gun lobby and public opinion.)

The biggest rewards, of course, are about taxation, and the internal self-discipline is impressive. When Reagan proposed his huge tax-rate cuts in 1981, the K Street corporate lobbyists piled on with their own list of goodies and the White House lost control; Reagan's tax cuts wound up much larger than he intended. This time around, business behaved itself when Bush proposed a tax package in 2001 in which its wish list was left out. "They supported the 2001 tax cuts because they knew there was going to be another tax cut every year and, if you don't support this year's, you go to the end of the line next time," Norquist says. Their patience has already been rewarded. The antitax movement follows a well-defined script for advancing step by step to the ultimate goal. Norquist has organized five caucuses to agitate and sign up Congressional supporters on five separate issues: estate-tax repeal (already enacted but still vulnerable to reversal); retirement-savings reforms; elimination of the alternative minimum tax; immediate business deductions for capital investment expenses (instead of a multiyear depreciation schedule); and zero taxation of capital gains. "If we do all of these things, there is no tax on capital and we are very close to a flat tax," Norquist exclaims.

The right seeks a reordering that will drive the country toward greater separation and segmentation of its many social elements.

The road ahead is far more difficult than he makes it sound, because along the way a lot of people will discover that they are to be the losers. In fact, the McKinley vision requires vast sectors of society to pay dearly, and from their own pockets. Martin Anderson has worked through the flat-tax arithmetic many times, and it always comes out a political loser. "The conservatives all want to revolutionize the tax system, frankly because they haven't thought it through," Anderson says. "It means people from zero to $35,000 income pay no tax and anyone over $150,000 is going to get a tax cut. The people in between get a tax increase, unless you cut federal spending. That's not going to happen."

Likewise, any substantial consumption tax does severe injury to another broad class of Americans—the elderly. They were already taxed when they were young and earning and saving their money, but a new consumption tax would now tax their money again as they spend it. Lawrence Lindsey, Bush's former economic adviser, has advocated a consumption-based flat tax that would probably require a rate of 21 percent on consumer purchases (like a draconian sales tax). He concedes, "It would be hitting the current generation of elderly twice. So it would be a hard sell."

"School choice" is also essentially a money issue, though this fact has been obscured by the years of Republican rhetoric demonizing the public schools and their teachers. Under tuition vouchers, the redistribution of income will flow from all taxpayers to the minority of American families who send their children to private schools, religious and secular. Those children are less than 10 percent of the 52 million children enrolled in K–12. You wouldn't know it from reading about the voucher debate, but the market share of private schools actually declined slightly during the past decade. The Catholic parochial system stands to gain the most from public financing, because its enrollment has declined by half since the 1960s (to 2.6 million). Though there was some growth during the 1990s, it was in the suburbs, not cities. Other private schools, especially religious schools in the South, grew more during the past decade (by about 400,000), but public schools expanded far faster, by 6 million. The point is, the right's constituency for "school choice" remains a small though fervent minority.

Conservatives have cleverly transformed the voucher question into an issue of racial equality—arguing that they are the best way to liberate impoverished black children from bad schools in slum surroundings. But educational quality notwithstanding, it is not self-evident that private schools, including the Catholic parochial system, are disposed to solve the problem of minority education, since they are highly segregated themselves. Catholic schools enroll only 2.5 percent of black students nationwide and, more telling, only 3.8 percent of Hispanic children, most of whom are Catholic. In the South hundreds of private schools originated to escape integration and were supported at first by state tuition grants (later ruled unconstitutional). "School choice," in short, might very well finance greater racial separation—the choice of whites to stick with their own kind—and at public expense.

The right's assault on environmental regulation has a similar profile. Taking the lead are small landowners or Western farmers who make appealing pleas to be left alone to enjoy their property and take care of it conscientiously. Riding alongside are developers and major industrial sectors (and polluters) eager to win the same rights, if not from Congress then the Supreme Court. But there's one problem: The overwhelming majority of Americans want stronger environmental standards and more vigorous enforcement.

V. Are They Right About America?

"Leave me alone" is an appealing slogan, but the right regularly violates its own guiding principle. The antiabortion folks intend to use government power to force their own moral values on the private lives of others. Free-market right-wingers fall silent when Bush and Congress intrude to bail out airlines, insurance companies, banks—whatever sector finds itself in desperate need. The hard-right conservatives are downright enthusiastic when the Supreme Court and Bush's Justice Department hack away at our civil liberties. The "school choice" movement seeks not smaller government but a vast expansion of taxpayer obligations. Maybe what the right is really seeking is not so much to be left alone by government but to use government to reorganize society in its own right-wing image.

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CRITICAL SOCIAL ISSUES

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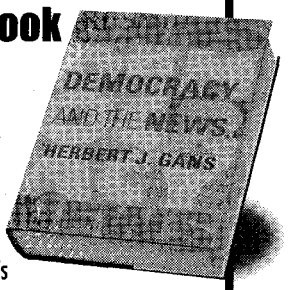

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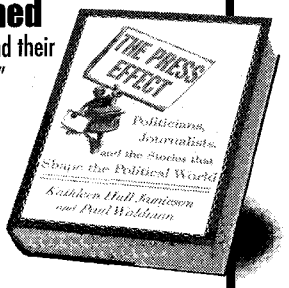
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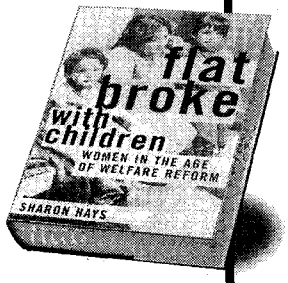

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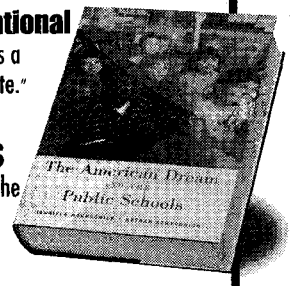

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All in all, the right's agenda promises a reordering that will drive the country toward greater separation and segmentation of its many social elements—higher walls and more distance for those who wish to protect themselves from messy diversity. The trend of social disintegration, including the slow breakup of the broad middle class, has been under way for several decades—fissures generated by growing inequalities of status and well-being. The right proposes to legitimize and encourage these deep social changes in the name of greater autonomy. Dismantle the common assets of society, give people back their tax money and let everyone fend for himself.

Is this the country Americans want for their grandchildren or great-grandchildren? If one puts aside Republican nostalgia for McKinley's gaslight era, it was actually a dark and troubled time for many Americans and society as a whole, riven as it was by harsh economic conflict and social neglect of everyday brutalities.

Autonomy can be lonely and chilly, as millions of Americans have learned in recent years when the company canceled their pensions or the stock market swallowed their savings or industrial interests destroyed their surroundings. For most Americans, there is no redress without common action, collective efforts based on mutual trust and shared responsibilities. In other words, I do not believe that most Americans want what the right wants. But I also think many cannot see the choices clearly or grasp the long-term implications for the country.

This is a failure of left-liberal politics. Constructing an effective response requires a politics that goes right at the ideology, translates the meaning of Bush's governing agenda, lays out the implications for society and argues unabashedly for a more positive, inclusive, forward-looking vision. No need for scaremongering attacks; stick to the well-known facts. Pose some big questions: Do Americans want to get rid of the income tax altogether and its longstanding premise that the affluent should pay higher rates than the humble? For that matter, do Americans think capital incomes should be excused completely from taxation while labor incomes are taxed more heavily, perhaps through a stiff national sales tax? Do people want to give up on the concept of the "common school"—one of America's distinctive achievements? Should property rights be given precedence over human rights or society's need to protect nature? The recent battles over Social Security privatization are instructive: When the labor-left mounted a serious ideological rebuttal, well documented in fact and reason, Republicans scurried away from the issue (though they will doubtless try again).

To make this case convincing, however, the opposition must first have a coherent vision of its own. The Democratic Party, alas, is accustomed to playing defense and has become wary of "the vision thing," as Dubya's father called it. Most elected Democrats, I think, now see their role as managerial rather than big reform, and fear that even talking about ideology will stick them with the right's demon label: "liberal." If a new understanding of progressive purpose does get formed, one that connects to social reality and describes a more promising future, the vision will not originate in Washington but among those who see realities up close and are struggling now to change things on the ground. We are a very wealthy (and brutally powerful) nation, so why do people experience so much stress and confinement in

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their lives, a sense of loss and failure? The answers, I suggest, will lead to a new formulation of what progressives want.

The first place to inquire is not the failures of government but the malformed power relationships of American capitalism—the terms of employment that reduce many workers to powerless digits, the closely held decisions of finance capital that shape our society, the waste and destruction embedded in our system of mass consumption and production. The goal is, like the right's, to create greater self-fulfillment but as broadly as possible. Self-reliance and individualism can be made meaningful for all only by first reviving the power of collective action.

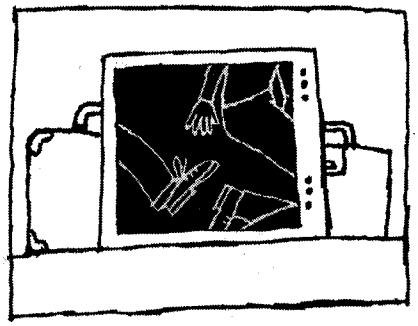
My own conviction is that a lot of Americans are ready to take up these questions and many others. Some are actually old questions—issues of power that were not resolved in the great reform eras of the past. They await a new generation bold enough to ask if our prosperous society is really as free and satisfied as it claims to be. When conscientious people find ideas and remedies that resonate with the real experiences of Americans, then they will have their vision, and perhaps the true answer to the right wing. ■

HOW 'FIGHTING TERRORISM' BECAME A BLUDGEON IN BUSH'S ASSAULT ON LABOR.

Screened Out

DAVID BACON

After a year of fighting with the federal government over the rights of displaced airport-baggage screeners, Kawal Ulanday finally got a response from authorities in late January. The FBI knocked on his door.



SCOTT MENCHIN

Agent William Root arrived with a list of questions reminiscent of another era: Were you born in Mindanao? Are you a Muslim? Are you anti-American? Ulanday, a community activist and organizer with Filipinos for Affirmative Action in Oakland, was born and raised in suburban San Pablo, California.

It was no surprise that the FBI seemed to be equating advocacy for the rights of immigrant workers with terrorism. On January 9 that connection was made in another way by the head of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Adm. James Loy, when he prohibited collective bargaining outright for the new airport-screener work force. "Fighting terrorism demands a flexible work force that can rapidly respond to threats," Loy said. "That can mean changes in work assignments and other conditions of employment that are not compatible with the duty to bargain with labor unions."

Had this been the private sector, or even those remaining parts of the federal government where normal labor rights still apply, the action would have been illegal. But since September 11 the terrain of labor relations under Bush has changed dramatically. National security is now the pretext for banning unions and rolling back the rights of workers across the board.

In January 2002 the Bush Administration ruled that a thousand workers in the Justice Department were ineligible for union membership, deeming it incompatible with their job responsibilities. The order denying their right to collective bargaining arrived the very day the National Treasury Employees Union filed a representation petition on their behalf.

In the debate over the Homeland Security Act last fall, Mitchell Daniels, director of the Office of Management and Budget, argued that excluding unions from the federal government might "eventually help us untie managerial talent across the executive branch." The act, passed immediately after the Republican sweep in November, while Dems still controlled the Senate, allows the Secretary of Homeland Security to exempt any group in the huge new department, encompassing 170,000 workers, from civil service regulations that govern pay grades, ban discrimination and protect whistleblowers. Even though thousands of these workers already belong to unions, the law also allows the secretary to prohibit collective bargaining.

In early February the Administration ruled that another thousand workers, at the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, would lose their bargaining rights. NIMA director James Clapper claimed that collective bargaining would compromise the ability of agency workers to perform intelligence, investigative and security duties, and promptly began to contract out much of the agency's work—an easy process without the obligation to bargain. "It's not that the employees' jobs have changed, or that NIMA's mission has changed," said Diane Witiak of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). "It's simply part of the Bush Administration's overall plan to bust federal-sector unions and reward his political contributors."

Bush's hostility to labor predates the September 11 attacks. Twice he has invoked back-to-work orders against airline unions—in March 2001 against mechanics, plane cleaners and janitors at Northwest Airlines, and in December 2001, at United Airlines, where 15,000 mechanics had voted almost unanimously to strike.

But his use of national security to justify anti-union intervention took a leap forward after 9/11. As a contract between the West Coast's International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association expired last July, the Administration threatened actions that would have made a longshore strike virtually illegal. When the PMA locked out the workers,

David Bacon, a West Coast–based writer and photographer, is completing a book on cross-border organizing, The Children of NAFTA.

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Bush invoked the Taft-Hartley Act. The Administration's legal brief, elaborated by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, held that all commercial cargo, not just military materials or vital goods, could be considered important to national security. By defining threats to security in economic terms, Rumsfeld made the case that any strike halting the operation of an industry or a large enterprise could now be declared illegal.

The treatment of airport screeners is the touchstone for this new world, where the Administration's antilabor agenda is at its most naked. Around 30,000 screeners, working in every major metropolitan area, were fired last year, one of the single largest mass terminations ever. But because those laid off were largely people of color and immigrants, and almost all without unions, their fate hardly created a media blip.

In the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, screeners were blamed for allowing terrorists armed with box cutters and plastic knives to board airliners. The items were all permissible at the time, but baggage screeners were a convenient scapegoat. Both Republicans and Democrats voted for the Transportation Security Act, which called for making screeners federal employees.

'You can fly the airplane if you're not a citizen, or carry a rifle [for] the National Guard. But you can't check passengers' bags.'

Federalizing the jobs could have benefited the existing work force, bringing higher wages and greater security. Most screeners then worked for wages close to the minimum, in high-stress jobs for private contractors hired by the airlines. Over the past decade, these poor conditions had finally inspired union organizing drives in many airports. In San Francisco in 2000, a new screeners' union finally raised wages above $10 an hour for the first time.

But by law, federal employees must be American citizens. That requirement cost thousands of immigrants their jobs. One was Erlinda Valencia, who used to work at the San Francisco airport. "I've done this job for fourteen years," she said, shortly before being fired, "but they're going to hire people with no experience at all. You can fly the airplane if you're not a citizen, or carry a rifle in the airport if you belong to the National Guard. But you can't check passengers' bags."

Valencia's union, Service Employees Local 790, lobbied to exempt San Francisco from the federalization process, making it one of five airports where private contractors continue to run screening operations. That saved the union contract, but it didn't save the workers. Noncitizens weren't even allowed to apply. The ACLU, with SEIU, FAA and other groups, challenged the noncitizen ban in court and won a limited decision, but while the case was on appeal the workers were canned. Proposed legislation to overturn the ban died in Congress, despite numerous demonstrations, mostly on the West Coast, by immigrant workers and supporters.

Citizen screeners didn't fare much better. The TSA set up a screening process designed by corporate executives Bush brought in on loan. The old screener work force was put at the end of the line for tests that asked candidates to guess what percentage of supervisors abuse employees, or what percentage of their co-workers cheat. The tests, in other words, were designed to elicit attitudes toward authority rather than test job skills, and, according to several applicants, many naturalized immigrants who spoke with accents were weeded out. In New York, St. Louis and Portland, supervisors gave new hires the answers to questions on certification tests in advance, according to *Newsday*. Old-timers such as former Oakland screener Lydia Koslowska, meanwhile, had to take the test without notice or preparation, at the end of a sixteen-hour shift.

As the federalization deadline approached last November, longtime workers at Oakland and San Francisco were so angry that they planned to stop work in protest. But as the TSA moved forward with the hiring process, the agency used both carrots and sticks to keep the old workers in line, promising extra pay for workers who stayed on until their termination date and, according to Ulanday, threatening to replace striking workers and deny them training and unemployment benefits.

"We were all promised a $500 bonus if we stayed to the end, but no one I know received anything," says Koslowska, who put in sixteen-hour days to keep lines running before she was terminated. After hundreds at Oakland lost their jobs in late November, the FAA and the Alameda County Central Labor Council had to organize food distribution to insure that they wouldn't go hungry over the holidays.

Corporate designers of the new screening system were well rewarded, however. According to a letter from the American Association of Airport Executives to Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, Boeing got $500 million from the TSA—funds earmarked for purchasing explosives-detection equipment—to pay for its training program. Boeing promptly subcontracted the work.

Since the implementation of the new federal law late last year, the composition of the new screener work force has radically changed. "At the top 100 airports, which employed 80 percent of the screeners, it was a majority-minority work force," according to SEIU researcher Robert Masciola. TSA reports that the new work force is 61 percent white, and only 31 percent of new hires are women. Of the original 30,000 screeners, only around 4,500 were rehired, according to the TSA. The real number, says AFGE organizer Peter Winch, could be lower.

Yet it turns out that federalizing the work force was no guarantee of good working conditions—or passenger safety. The TSA hired many former military and law-enforcement personnel into management positions, which, according to one screener at New York's JFK Airport, has created a culture of "do what you're told, and don't ask questions." While regulations call for forty hours of classroom education and sixty hours of job training, many new hires were thrown onto the lines with much less. In Pittsburgh, new hires worked forty-eight-hour weeks through the holidays, their one day off switched on the whim of supervisors. Mandatory overtime was a constant at JFK and La Guardia airports, where some screeners put in seven-day weeks during the same period and were told to quit if they didn't like it. Workers at the X-ray machines still often have no radiation badges to measure cumulative exposure, and some already have back problems from lifting heavy bags. "I have friends who've been sexually harassed," the JFK screener adds,

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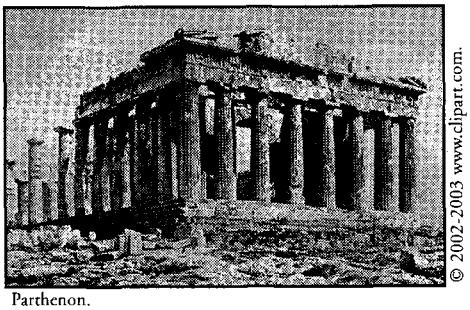

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"but with no union, who can they go to? If they complain, managers just transfer the man to another terminal."

Adopting the corporate model for compensation, the TSA set up "pay bands" between $24,000 and $36,000 a year, instead of the normal scale. Unlike with other federal workers, supervisors unilaterally determine the actual salary, and since the new year, everyone has started at the bottom. Probation for new hires lasts a year.

Despite the insecurity, these conditions quickly convinced many to organize. By mid-February, AFGE had filed petitions to bargain for 6,000 workers at La Guardia, Baltimore, Orlando, Chicago Midway, JFK, and ten other airports and organizing committees were preparing petitions at several more. That was when Loy issued his January 9 order prohibiting collective bargaining.

When AFGE challenged the order the very next day, the TSA responded by arguing that even if it were not upheld, screeners should still be blocked from forming unions airport by airport. Instead, they should be required by the Feds to form one national bargaining unit—a huge obstacle. Tellingly, one of the TSA's execs is Clifford Hardt, Federal Express's director for special projects, and this was precisely the strategy used by FedEx when its own workers tried to organize. After Congress killed that drive by mandating that the workers organize nationally, Hardt boasted to the *Sacramento Bee* that "we couldn't have done what we did if they hadn't torn down established procedures."

But instead of accepting the fate dealt to FedEx workers, AFGE challenged Loy's ban by setting up a national union for screeners, headed by its national president, Bobby Harnage.

AFGE and the 50,000-plus new federal screeners are up against the Bush Administration's new war on labor, justified in the name of national security. Few unions have chosen to challenge the new rationale directly, opting instead for more limited arguments that question whether changes sought by the Administration are necessary and fair, and whether they violate union rights. But once the logic that labor organizing poses a threat to national security is accepted, almost any crackdown on workers—especially immigrant workers—becomes justifiable.

The TSA is using the new mantra to great effect to thwart the latest organizing efforts. TSA spokesperson Chris Rhatigan told *Airport News* in January that "collective bargaining would be incompatible with the nation's safety." In the same article, TSA representative Nico Melendez was even more blunt: "Security is paramount and collective bargaining could cripple the system."

Unions organized two huge Solidarity Day demonstrations in the early 1980s after Ronald Reagan signaled his labor offensive by busting the air traffic controllers' union. But they have yet to mount a similar mass response to defend the screeners or to question the antilabor uses of "national security." This timidity hardly puts the Administration on notice that labor intends an all-out battle to resist, and it seems unlikely that Bush and his corporate allies will be deterred by anything less. ■

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Hammering Down I-25

JAMES LEE BURKE

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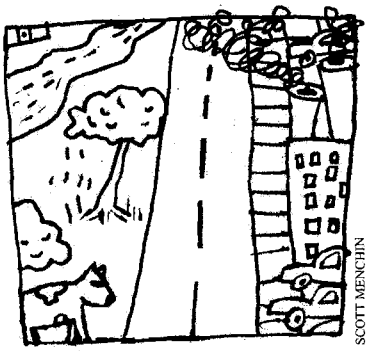

SCOTT MENCHIN

Most of my literary effort has been spent writing about the South and the American West. Geographically, I have always felt at home in either region. But the historical era with which people my age identify is less easily defined.

Americans of my generation, those born in the Great Depression, are transitional people, and as a consequence we tend to look at the historical calendar in the same way the two-faced Roman god Janus looked back at the preceding year and forward at the one to come. Because of the privation of the times we were born into, we throw away nothing, consider the wasting of food a theological offense and consider most financial institutions suspect. In some ways we feel we are sojourners in the present, with invalid passports, a bit suspect ourselves for the attitudes we hold.

George Orwell once described England as a protean creature, stretching ceaselessly into the past, forever changing, forever the same. I think the same could be said of the United States. The changes I've witnessed in my lifetime are enormous. But the strength, resilience, courage and compassion that are inherent in every aspect of the American value system remain unchanged. Unfortunately, our greatest weakness and vulnerability is still with us too—namely, our willingness to place our faith in charlatans, flag-waving demagogues and upscale hucksters who would turn the Grand Canyon into a gravel pit.

When I was a child, southern Louisiana was a misplaced piece of Caribbean culture where more people spoke French than English, almost all the dirt roads and state highways were canopied with live oaks, and each morning came to you like a

James Lee Burke is a novelist who lives in Louisiana and Montana.

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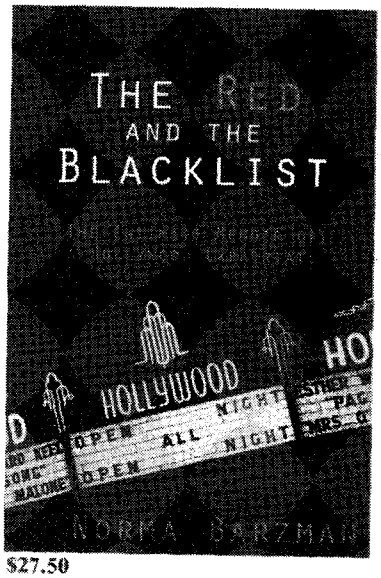

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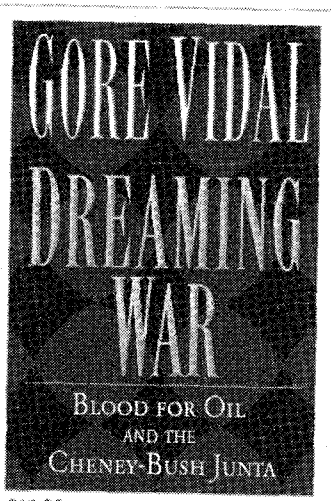

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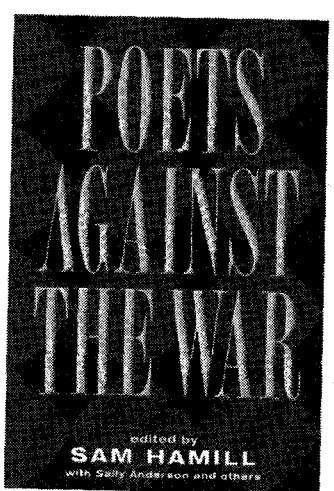

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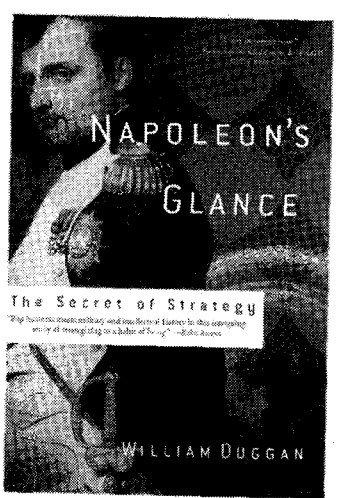

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gift, filled with birdsong, smelling of chicory coffee, ponded water, spearmint growing in a brick courtyard, night-blooming flowers, lichen crusted on stone, moldy pecan husks and fish spawning in the bayou. Time was static, and the salmon-colored vault of heaven over our heads was simply an extension of the idyllic natural world into which we had been born.

In his autobiographical book *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, Henry Miller wrote of his visit to New Iberia during the Second World War and of the innocent way of life that characterized New Iberia's Acadian people, whose cypress cabins and houseboats and pirogues along Bayou Teche were shrouded in mist in the predawn hours, and the only sounds were fish flopping in the lily ponds.

Of course, the old injustices were here, too: massive illiteracy, rule by the plantation oligarchy, the denial of equality to people of color, wage exploitation of the poor, the great discrepancy between the haves and the have-nots.

The plantation oligarchy has gone, but it has been replaced in economic and political influence by the petrochemical industry.

The irony is that in many ways the deleterious aspects of early Louisiana society have found greater permanence in the present than the Edenic world described by Miller. For the most part, the plantation oligarchy is gone, but it has been replaced in economic and political influence by the petrochemical industry.

This essay isn't meant to be an attack upon the oil business. My father worked for a pipeline company most of his adult life. I was a landman for Sinclair Oil Company and a surveyor on the pipeline and briefly a laborer in what is called the oil patch. Oil people are like Roman legionnaires. They're the cutting edge of an empire. The grunts who actually produce the oil and natural gas out of the ground are the hardest-working, most stoic and fearless people I've ever known.

But petroleum corporations are totally pragmatic, if not amoral, and they do business with baseball bats. In the Hollywood film *The Formula*, Marlon Brando plays the role of a morally insane Texas oilman. One of his colleagues says something to the effect of, "These damn A-rabs is sure causing us a mess of grief, ain't they?"

As I recall, Brando replies, "Son, haven't you figured it out yet? We *are* the A-rabs."

The petrochemical industry in Louisiana *is* Louisiana. What that translates into is the second-worst environmental record in the United States. The governor of the state threatens, on television, to investigate volunteer attorneys who take on the cases of poor blacks whose communities have been used as open-pit dumping grounds for waste haulers throughout the South. For years our waterways have been considered among the most polluted in America.

This is the new world of Wal-Mart and the ubiquitous strip mall. The state roads and the parking lots of discount stores are literally layered with trash, thrown there by the cavalier, whose self-congratulatory hedonism is a form of anti-confiteor. Drive-by daiquiri windows are not only legal but under Louisiana law the owner cannot be punished for selling to minors as long as the infraction is committed by his employee.

I think the old plantation oligarchy would doff their hats in tribute to the public servants who have helped create a disparity in the quality of life here that has no peer outside the Third World.

My first trip into the real West was at age 15, when my father bought me a dollar watch and put me on a Southern Pacific sleeping car bound for a summer of trout fishing in Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountains. I woke in the Pullman berth around 4:30 the next morning near Raton Pass. That particular dawn was marked by the most beautiful sunrise I have ever witnessed. The mesas were enormous and pink against a night-black sky, the hillsides a velvet green that seemed soaked in blood. When the train stopped before the long pull up Raton Pass, I stepped down from the vestibule into the coolness of the dawn and the good smell of the creosote in the railway ties and woodsmoke rising from the stucco houses in the valley. In the hiss of steam from the locomotive, the rattle of the ice and mail wagons across the train platform, I felt I had stepped through a hole in the dimension, back into the world of Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp when they pursued the Clanton-McLaury gang into Colorado after the shootout at the OK Corral.

Up the grade lay the old mining town of Trinidad, the gateway to the Rocky Mountains, its cobbled streets specked with frost, its nineteenth-century buildings softly lit in the morning light. The past was right at the end of my fingertips.

My wife and I have made that trip, over and over, for exactly forty years now, except today we continue on up Interstate 25, through Colorado and Wyoming, and then into western Montana, where we live half the year. But the two-lane road that followed the South Platte River north from Denver through meadowland and cottonwoods is now a highway swarming with cars that drive close to eighty miles an hour, many of them SUVs burning gasoline as though there were no tomorrow.

My wife was in a hospital in Missoula, Montana, undergoing tests the morning of September 11, 2001, and I was in the waiting room, watching the news on CNN, when suddenly the cameras cut to the attacks on the Twin Towers. I will never forget the images that came through the television screen that morning, and like all Americans who were alive the day President Kennedy was murdered or the Sunday the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, I will always remember what I was doing at that particular moment. I felt my chest contract and my eyes water, and even though I was 64 years old, I felt the same sense of shock and fear and, ultimately, horror that I had felt as a 5-year-old child when, at 1:05 Central Standard Time, in a small cafe run by an elderly man from St. Martinville named Mr. Goula, a small, brown, wood-cased radio with a tiny yellow station indicator announced that the Second World War had just begun.

During the six weeks following the September 11 attacks I think I slept two nights. I could not rid myself of the images of the people who held hands and leapt to their deaths to avoid burning in the flames. Or of the firemen and police officers who went up the stairwells of both buildings, knowing in all probability they would be crushed to death or buried alive. How loving and how brave do human beings get? The answer, I think, is in the images of those desperate souls who held hands in their last moments and

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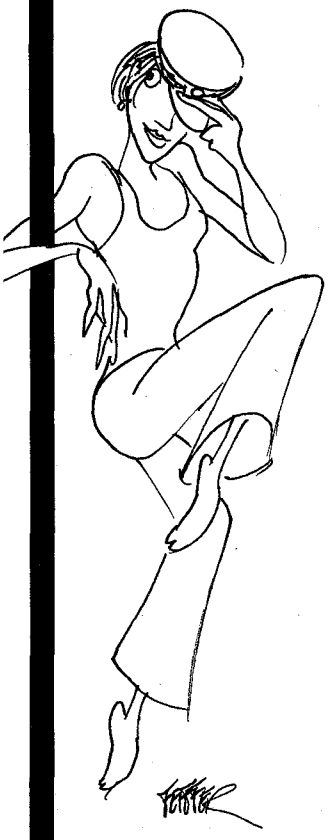

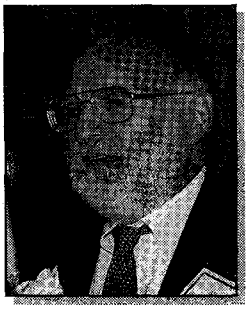

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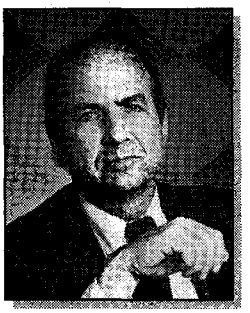

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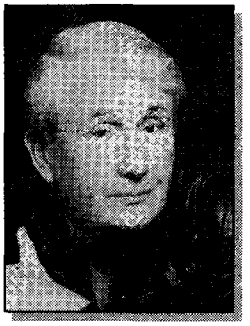

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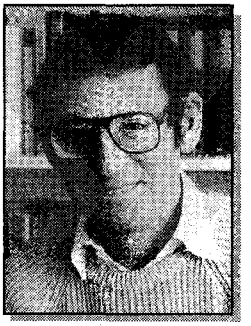

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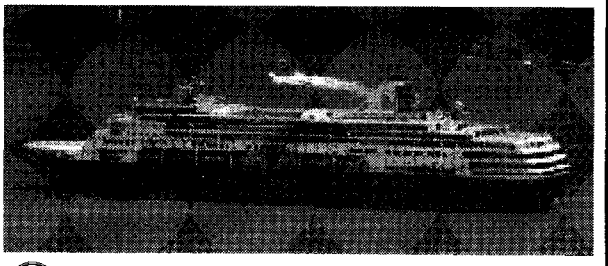
Dec. 10	Wed	Santo Tomas de Castilla, Guatemala	6:00AM	6:00PM
Dec. 11	Thu	Cozumel, Mexico	1:00PM	11:30PM
Dec. 12	Fri	Day at Sea		
Dec. 13	Sat	Tampa, Florida	8:00AM	



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those courageous men who plunged upward into darkness and flame in order to save lives at the cost of their own.

Before his death, Adlai Stevenson made a statement about the level of humanity that characterized the foreign policy of the United States immediately after World War II. We were the only nation on earth that possessed atomic bombs. We could have turned the planet into a slave camp of watchtowers and concertina wire if we had chosen. Instead, through the Marshall Plan, we rebuilt the countries of our enemies. As Stevenson pointed out, no nation on earth ever acted with as much humanity.

But today, as I fly-fish the almost mythic Blackfoot River of western Montana, I realize I am perhaps seeing the last of the wilderness areas that for most of us geographically define the historical United States. Extractive industries wait like a starving man at a banquet table, knife and fork at the ready, to rip into virgin lands. Every justification is offered: jobs, tax revenues and, most perversely, national defense and what has come to be known as the war on terrorism, which seems to have replaced the old slogan "the war on communism."

I believe every individual has a special place in his or her heart that he or she creates out of the aggregate of that individual's experience. I liken it to a stained-glass cathedral visited by the people who are emblematic of our lives, the virtues and qualities we hold dear, even the weaknesses and the frailty of moral vision that give us our humanity. The special place where I live is full of Americans who to me are heroic: Dorothy Day, the Maryknolls who were martyred in El Salvador, Molly Brown, Joe Hill, Thomas Jefferson, Woody Guthrie, the women and children who died in the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, Audie Murphy and Flannery O'Connor. And once again, the great irony is that the bravest people I've ever known are people who are so humble and nondescript you cannot remember what they look like ten minutes after they leave a room. But in the final say each of them is a descendant of Natty Bumppo.

Let the revisionists and denigrators say what they will. This is a great country and it's an enormous privilege to live inside its borders. The egalitarian meritocracy that Jefferson envisioned will probably become a reality in this century. In the meantime we'll continue to hear the shrill voices of those who despise the idea of a pluralistic society. Their message is vitriolic and filled with fear and hatred because they know they're on the wrong side of history. But they make handy point men for those who would grind up our forests, leach gold out of the rocks with cyanide in the Blackfoot drainage and drill for natural gas on the edge of Glacier National Park.

I hope the day comes when the degenerates and cowards who planned and paid for the attacks on the Trade Towers and the Pentagon are rounded up and given what they deserve, perhaps life terms chain-ganging on the hard road under the oversight of a few tobacco-chewing Mississippi gun bulls. I also hope the day will come when our national leaders will not lionize a collection of bedbugs and use the suffering of others to reinstitute a return to both cold war rhetoric and military spending.

But whatever happens, I will always feel a great pride in having been a participant in my country's national experience. The American story is an epic one, and all you need to do in order to see all its historical manifestations is to let imagination have its

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way for a moment or two and walk or drive through the older parts of our cities or across the countryside in the early morning hours when the fog hides the present and reveals the past.

In the late fall my wife and I drive south on I-25, through the Big Horn Valley, on through Denver and Pueblo, and past the site of the Ludlow Massacre, where striking miners and their families were attacked by state militia and unionbusters who worked for John D. Rockefeller's mineral interests. A tent city sheltering strikers and their families was set afire and machine-gunned. Thirteen women and children took refuge in a cellar under the flames. They died there, and today, between Trinidad and Pueblo, you can turn off I-25 onto a side road that leads you out on the hardpan toward the mountains, which are dotted with pinyon trees and turn a dark purple in the fall.

The storm cellar's still there.

When you lift the door and descend the stairs, I would swear you can hear the voices of the dead in the plaster walls.

Farther on, when you drive down Raton Pass south of Trinidad, you will see the ruins of a stucco mission tucked back in the hills to the west. It was built by Rockefeller, supposedly to rehabilitate his image after the killings at Ludlow.

What does it all mean? For me, the answer is simple. The potential in human beings for either good or evil seems limitless. When I return to our home in Louisiana, on Bayou Teche, a tidal stream on which members of my family have lived since 1836, I look at the red sun beyond the live oaks on the bayou, the smoke from stubble fires drifting off the fields, the hammered gold-and-purple light on the sugarcane, and in the gloaming of the day I want to see the moment caught forever inside a photographer's lens, before the land developers and the builders of strip malls and discount stores have their way with what I think are the gifts of both Heaven and Earth.

A character in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* says, "The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for." St. Paul talked about fighting the good fight. I think both men understood the ongoing nature of the struggle and the fact that the contest is never over, the field never quite ours. To be a participant, though, in whatever small capacity, is nonetheless a grand and ennobling experience. Sometimes on I-25 I think I hear Woody Guthrie's voice on the wind. It's a wonderful feeling to belong to both the past and the future and to be linked in spirit and vision to those who perhaps represent everything that is good and brave and decent in the human family.

At least it has been for me. ■

Letter From Zimbabwe

by Gabrielle Menezes

The ravages of drought are evident to anyone traveling through Zimbabwe. The carcass of a dead donkey lies on the road, while skeletal dogs tear at its intestines. The majestic Save River, once deep enough for hippos to wallow in, can now be crossed by foot. Government estates, however, are green with winter wheat and maize, irrigated by reservoir water. In contrast, privately owned commercial farms, which should have provided about a third of Zimbabwe's maize, have melted into the surrounding dry bush. Food aid from abroad must now make up for these lost harvests.

Famine anywhere is a tragedy, but when it is caused by a country's government it is an unspeakable crime. This is what makes the starving millions in Zimbabwe different from those in other Southern African countries enduring famine. Zimbabwe used to be the breadbasket of the region. President Robert Mugabe's chaotic land-reform policies and the widespread illegal farm invasions he encouraged make the government partly responsible for the famine, which it is now exploiting for its own survival. To give food aid in a politicized environment is complicated; it is the ultimate political weapon, and something the government needs to control at all costs to maintain its position.

Mealie-meal is the staple food of Zimbabwe. A white powder made from ground maize, it is used to make a thick porridge called *sadza*. Maize is becoming increasingly rare. In the capital, Harare, a seething mass of people queuing for maize can easily be mistaken for a riot. The main way of getting mealie-meal in Zimbabwe is through the government-controlled Grain Marketing Board, where maize can be bought at controlled prices. The government, conveniently, has kept a monopoly on importing maize, and very few import licenses have been granted to nongovernmental organizations. Anyone who supports the political opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), or anyone who does not support Mugabe's ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), is not sold food.

Felix (who doesn't want to use his last name for fear of retribution) is typical of people who have been unable to get mealie-meal because they don't have party cards. Although he works as a gardener in one of Harare's affluent suburbs and earns above the average wage, Felix's children recently went for three days without food. "You know, to get mealie-meal in Zimbabwe it is now very tough," Felix says. "To get it you first have to get a ZANU-PF card. But even at the Grain Marketing Board, people are not getting maize, so people are dying of hunger."

The second way of getting food is by registering in a government "food for work" program. Traditionally, in times of drought, families with no harvest and no money to purchase food perform public labor—for example, repairing rural roads—in return for food. In many instances MDC supporters have not been allowed to register for food-for-work programs.

Gabrielle Menezes is a journalist who has just released a documentary on famine in Zimbabwe.

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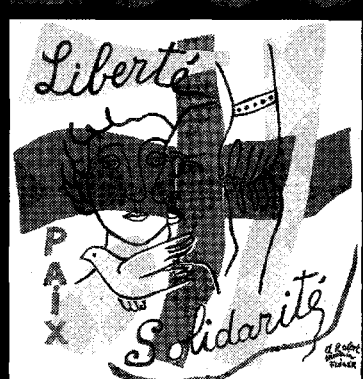

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There is also a third way of getting food, which is from international food aid programs. The largest such program is the United Nations World Food Program, which contracts with local organizations to distribute its food aid. The catch is that NGOs used by the WFP need to be registered by the Zimbabwean government.

Christian Care, one of the NGOs that give out WFP food, reluctantly agreed to let me travel with them to food distribution points. Courage Chirove, a refreshingly down-to-earth aid worker, drives me to the village of Rimai. Hidden among bushes and trees, it is miles away from a paved road, not to mention a town. When we arrive, people are patiently waiting for food to be distributed. Some of the women have walked four miles; they will walk back the same way, gracefully balancing kilos of maize and beans on their heads, and with children tied around their waists. The signs of malnutrition are beginning to be visible in the children in the waiting crowd. Their bellies beneath ragged T-shirts are slightly distended; their twiglike arms are shrinking to bone. Their eyes are large in their faces. When asked, most of the children say they eat just one meal of *sadza* a day.

Food in Rimai is kept in the schoolhouse, the only concrete building in the area big enough to store the hundreds of WFP maize bags. There's not enough food for everyone, so there are registers of those most in need: orphans, widows, pregnant women and child-headed households. The WFP believes it is important to involve the community in giving out food aid, so the registers are compiled by community leaders. However, in such a politicized environment as Zimbabwe, this may not be such a good idea. Community leaders with political affiliations are able to manipulate the registers. This is likely to happen in places like Rimai, where many villagers support the opposition but where ZANU-PF officials are in charge.

The headmaster of Rimai is a community leader. A slight man with an unctuous smile, he welcomes me into his office. Behind him is a ZANU-PF poster for the 2002 elections, showing how to vote by neatly ticking the box that says ZANU-PF. On another wall a framed portrait of Mugabe takes pride of place. Posters like these are not supposed to be around any of the food distribution points. As one WFP worker told me, there are many ways to intimidate people.

It is hard to ask questions in Zimbabwe. People are afraid to answer and are suspicious of those who ask them. The headmaster follows me around as I try to talk to people. He assures me that all the food distribution has been fair. Later, however, a Christian Care worker admits to me that there have been political problems with the registers. She hastens to add that now the registers are in order. Maybe.

"In Rimai," says Chirove, "there are war veterans on the committee. The government uses war veterans badly, but we have only had a problem with the ones who are partisan." The people who fought in Zimbabwe's liberation war have traditionally been supporters of Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party. In 1997 the veterans, incensed at the wealth that politicians had amassed for themselves while they remained in poverty, demanded money and later land. The government acquiesced in their wishes, and began its chaotic land-reform program. The war vets have since been seen as instruments of Mugabe's policies to cleanse the land of white farmers.

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While I am in Rimai, Chirove goes to a village meeting to get people to revise their registers. After he picks me up, and once we are in the privacy of the car, he tells me that war veterans and the CIO (the Central Intelligence Organization, Zimbabwe's feared secret police) invited themselves along to the meeting. The war vets and CIO claimed that Christian Care is acting as an agent of the opposition. They said that posters with the MDC logo, an open hand, were found in the bags of maize being distributed. This allegation is pure fiction. All the blue-and-white WFP bags are sealed. "That this is not government food had incensed people," says Chirove. "The war vets said to withdraw the statement by one of the staff that the food aid had nothing to do with the government, and that Christian Care should not tamper with the registers. The police said some of the statements might lead to violence." Chirove says he eventually managed to placate the war vets, telling them, "The WFP is a branch of the UN. Zimbabwe is a member of the UN, and that's why we're getting help."

Weeks later, Christian Care admits to me that one of its program administrators was kidnapped by war veterans and held overnight, but quickly insists that it has had no further problems with the vets. Although problems are meant to be reported to the WFP, one WFP worker is surprised when I tell her about the efforts to intimidate Christian Care personnel.

Christian Care is not the only NGO that has been experiencing problems distributing aid. Care International in the Chivi District and in Mberengwa East have received complaints that their registers favor supporters of Mugabe's regime. Although NGOs have shown a willingness to intervene when problems arise, human rights organizations say that generally problems are not reported.

The World Food Program is in a difficult position. It has to be invited into a country and work with that country's government. Like all UN organizations, it bends over backward to be seen as impartial. The situation in Zimbabwe once again raises the issue of whether this policy of impartiality can fairly be seen as going along with government policy, which in this case is discriminatory. Some organizations, like the Catholic Commission, suspended their feeding programs, refusing to allow war vets or the government to tell them whom they can or can't feed. But for a humanitarian organization to withdraw aid is especially repugnant. In Chirove's opinion, "If you withdraw aid, the person who caused the problem doesn't suffer."

Back in Rimai, food distribution goes on all day. Women energetically check registers and weigh food under the parching sun. Some WFP bags of food are missing, and a group of leaders argue about what to do. Who should be given less food? In the middle of this debate a man taps me discreetly on the shoulder. "Sister, you are wanted," he says. I follow him into an empty classroom where I am presented with a plate of food and a miraculous glass of water. On the plate is a mound of *sadza* and some dubious meat. This is more food that most of the people here will eat in two days. But a guest is sacred, and according to the dictates of hospitality starving people must now feed me. In this country tormented by famine, twisted politics and violence, I have been given a glimpse of something else. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
anyone notice the absence of *women* heroes? A firefighter from Sonoma County, California, did. She and others have gathered the stories of these courageous women in a book called *Women at Ground Zero*. That blatant omission is no accident—it's just another example of Goldstein's neo-macho ideology at work.

ELAINE MCHUGH

San Rafael, Calif.

■ The clarity of Richard Goldstein's argument made me remember two seemingly unrelated incidents: the 1988 presidential debates and comedian Bill Maher's talk/entertainment show. First, the debate. Bernard Shaw of CNN waylaid Michael Dukakis with his capital punishment question, "What would you do if your wife, Kitty, was raped?" It put him on the hot seat, asking in essence, how should a man of action—a potential leader—handle violent situations? protect himself? protect us? Dukakis answered like a robot and was judged right then to have lost the debate.

On a Bill Maher show, the Iraq war was "debated" by comedians. The tone was all about machismo, with Dennis Miller goading his debate partners with name-calling, offensive language and posturing (i.e., why pay attention to Jimmy Carter's Nobel Peace Prize or his opposition to the war, when he'd run a "turd presidency"?).

The stakes have risen to the level of life and death but are submerged by an attack on liberal male leaders as emasculated failures. Unless we want to hand this country over to the attack dawgs, we must anticipate this barrage and formulate a vocabulary *and* an attitude that fights back. For ideas, look to the lesbian-feminist revolt of the 1970s; look to Queer Nation and ACT UP in the 1980s. The sissies had a comprehensive strategy, an alternative viewpoint, some pretty sharp teeth and an impressive record of self-defense.

BARBARA TANNENBAUM

Orinda, Calif.

■ Richard Goldstein is quite right that critics and artists must lead the way toward a new political vocabulary. But just dissenting won't get us there, and it won't do progressive values justice either. We ought to take back the language of core American values, enshrined in our Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights, and carried along in the stream of American culture right up to the magnificent speeches by Senator Robert Byrd. For some quick ideas about what language to use, take a look at www.metaphorproject.org—and the sooner the better. SUSAN C. STRONG

FASCISM CAN MAKE YOU SICK...

Greensboro, NC

■ Wow. Like many people around the world, I've been feeling queasy for months, and Wallace Shawn finally diagnosed what's been ailing me ["Fragments From a Diary," March 31]. The truth that the faces of the Administration have been glowing since shortly after 9/11 may be an obvious one, but one that is so sick-making that I had not seen it, and instead just felt sick about... something. Thank you, Mr. Shawn.

KATHLEEN LOWREY

WANT FREEDOM FRIES WITH THAT?

Spring Mills, Pa.

■ Bob Blau's April 14 letter about pernicious names like "freedom fries" was right on the mark. I remember my grandparents talking about "liberty cabbage" (sauerkraut) and "Salisbury steak" (hamburg steak) when I was growing up. Blau did not go far enough with his proposal for the Statue of Liberty, however. My modest proposal is that we simply scrap the whole thing, break it down and ship it back COD to "old Europe," a perfect resting place for the symbol of "old America." We should replace it with the true symbol of the "new America," an upraised clenched fist with an extended middle finger. FRANK GENTRY

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 6)

terrogate "suspected terrorists," virtually none of whom have turned out to have anything to do with terrorism. Now Attorney General John Ashcroft seeks to extend that strategy nationwide, ultimately giving every police officer, from a rural county sheriff to a state police traffic cop, the same pretextual tools. This development should sound alarm bells, for it is likely to undermine criminal law enforcement, affecting the safety of us all.

Until recently, only the Immigration and Naturalization Service was authorized to enforce immigration law, for two very good reasons. Immigration law is notoriously complex, and its enforcement requires specialized training. And more important, it interferes with criminal law enforcement. Foreign nationals with any possible immigration problems who are victims of or witnesses to crimes simply will not come forward if the price of doing so might be deportation. For those reasons, we have always divided criminal and immigration law enforcement.

That tradition appears to be coming to an end, however. In March, Ashcroft for the first time ever authorized FBI officials to make immigration arrests. And in a secret memo, which the ACLU and others recently filed suit to obtain, Justice has reversed its longstanding position that state and local law enforcement officials are barred from enforcing routine immigration laws.

The Justice Department has already begun entering immigration data into the National Criminal Information Center (NCIC) database, the system that state and local police check whenever they confront a person in a traffic stop or other encounter. That database was supposed to be limited to criminal records. But now the Justice Department is including civil immigration information from two programs selectively targeted at Arabs and Muslims—Special Registration and the Absconder Apprehension Initiative.

In late March, Justice went still further. It eliminated a longstanding requirement that the government insure that information in the NCIC database is accurate and current, saying the requirement is an impediment to investigations. So if Ashcroft gets his way, we'll see state and local police arresting foreign nationals on immigration charges, without any training in the technicalities of immigration law and relying on information whose accuracy the government will not even vouch for.

Ashcroft's ultimate goal is to use immigration law to fight terrorism in much the way that traffic regulations have been used in the war on drugs. Just as police looking for drugs can now stop and search virtually anyone in a car on the pretext of a traffic violation, without any objective basis for suspecting them of carrying drugs, so the Justice Department has used immigration violations to target, hold and interrogate "suspected terrorists" without any objective basis for their suspicion. And just as the drug war strategy resulted in thousands of innocent African-Americans being stopped for "driving while black," so the Justice Department's enforcement has facilitated ethnic profiling of thousands of innocent Arabs and Muslims. Now Ashcroft wants every law-enforcement officer in the country to enlist in this effort.

But here's where federalism plays to our advantage. Under the Tenth Amendment, the federal government cannot compel state and local officials to implement a federal program. In the end, it will be up to every state, city and county to decide for itself whether it wants its police force to take up Ashcroft's dubious enterprise. Shortly after September 11 police departments in Portland, Oregon, Madison, Wisconsin, and elsewhere refused to cooperate with the FBI's "voluntary interviews" of Arab and Muslim foreign nationals. Now, dozens of police departments and police associations have expressed concern about taking on immigration enforcement. As Sacramento Police Chief Arturo Venegas Jr. argued, "We've made tremendous inroads into a lot of our immigrant communities. To get into the enforcement of immigration laws would build wedges and walls that have taken a long time to break down." For reasons of equality and security, we must fight to keep state and local police out of the business of regulating immigration status. DAVID COLE

David Cole (cole@law.georgetown.edu) is The Nation*'s legal affairs correspondent.*

The Public Is the Enemy

On March 22, a few hundred peaceful antiwar protesters in Seattle who had gathered around the Federal Building suddenly found themselves being swept down streets by officers in riot gear and then corralled onto the sidewalk. As hundreds of officers encircled and trapped them, snipers were spotted on rooftops and cops formed riot lines, holding rubber bullet guns and M-16s. Injuries inflicted on the demonstrators ranged from head wounds to taser burns. So far, the public defender's office has received around 200 complaints about police misconduct, brutality and illegal arrests.

It's all part of an alarming trend that has emerged in the policing of antiwar and social justice demonstrations. The problem seems particularly acute in Seattle, which jumped into international headlines in 1999 when the downtown area became a temporary battlefield during global justice protests at the WTO Ministerial Conference. Since then, the use of militaristic tactics by police has become common. At the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas even at those complying with dispersal orders; and at IMF protests in Washington last year some 650 people were arrested and police were accused of brutality toward those detained.

Back in Seattle, nearly four years after the WTO demonstrations, the city has still not fully recovered. If recent antiwar events are any indication, little if anything seems to have been learned. Among those arrested in Seattle on March 22 was public defender Lisa Daugaard, who was handing out information to protesters about a hotline to report police abuses. "This is a public sidewalk," Daugaard responded to an officer who told her to leave immediately. "Not today it's not," the officer is alleged to have responded. Daugaard was arrested and spent the next six hours in jail, where, she reports, officers made fun of protesters with injuries and berated them for being opposed to the war. "These are the kinds of things we never used to see in Seattle before," says Daugaard.

Elsewhere, the New York Police Department seemed to approach the February 15 demonstration as if it were a military "containment and control" operation. Police herded people and then

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blocked them from exiting, resulting in numerous arrests. Videotapes showed police backing horses into demonstrators, pushing people into metal barricades, pepper-spraying demonstrators and raising nightsticks against penned-in protesters. In late March in Washington, DC, the ACLU filed a federal lawsuit charging police with violating the constitutional rights of more than 400 peaceful demonstrators and "sweeping" citizens (including nonprotesters) into enclosed spaces and then arresting them. In Oakland on April 7, police fired on roughly 500 antiwar protesters with wooden bullets, causing face and body injuries to several activists and working longshoremen who had nothing to do with the protest.

The militarization of law enforcement is a national trend, says Seattle attorney Paul Richmond, who produced *Urban Warrior*, a new documentary film that examines the blurring of boundaries between military tactics and civilian law enforcement. According to Peter Kraska, editor of *Militarizing the American Criminal Justice System*, nearly 90 percent of American police departments serving cities with 50,000-plus residents have paramilitary units. A 1999 Cato Institute study of the growth of paramilitarism in American police departments noted that the Pentagon has been equipping those units with M-16s, armed personnel carriers and grenade launchers, and that such units regularly conduct training exercises with Army Rangers and Navy SEALs. Richmond likens the use of military weaponry and police tactics in Seattle to a kind of "market test" of new crowd-control tactics, weapons and even chemical agents that were once used only in combat situations.

Richmond argues that paramilitary police units already appear to have carte blanche to use any and all means to quash dissent. "As long as weapons and tactics like these are in use," he adds, "the civilian population is being viewed as the enemy. Unfortunately, it seems like an indication of what's to come." SILJA J.A. TALVI

Silja J.A. Talvi, an award-winning journalist and contributor to Prison Nation *(Routledge), is based in Seattle.*

Crackdown in Cuba

The arrest and long-term imprisonment of dozens of dissidents in Cuba and the rapid execution of three men who had attempted to hijack a boat were deplorable. Over the past few years, there had been an encouraging trend toward greater tolerance of dissent in Cuba. Former President Jimmy Carter met with dissidents during his trip to Cuba a year ago. Other international leaders and many visiting Americans have also met with them. Some of the better-known dissidents were allowed to travel abroad. The government didn't like the Varela Project, which calls for a referendum on greater political liberties and economic reforms, but it had not imprisoned those who put it forward.

Why then this sudden reversal? Why the crackdown? In part, it was in reaction to growing provocations on the part of the Bush Administration, which had ordered the new chief of the US Interests Section, James Cason, to hold a series of high-profile meetings with dissidents, even including seminars in his own residence in Havana. Given that Cason's announced purpose was to promote "transition to a participatory form of government," the Cubans came to see the meetings as subversive in nature and as highly provocative. And, in fairness, let us imagine the reaction of the Attorney General and the Director of Homeland Security if the chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington was holding meetings with disgruntled Americans and announcing that the purpose was to bring about a new form of government—a socialist government—in the United States. He would have been asked to leave the country faster than Tom Ridge could say "duct tape."

An even more crucial element in the crackdown than Cason's meetings with dissidents was the announcement of the US policy of "pre-emptive" strikes and the beginning of the war in Iraq. It looked to the Cubans as though the United States had clearly decided on a policy of military action against any so-called rogue state it deemed a possible threat—and to ignore international organizations and international law in the process. It was time, the Cubans concluded, to batten down the hatches. "Who knows?" one Cuban put it to me, "We may be next."

They noted that Cuba had sometimes been mentioned as part of the "axis of evil." And they remembered that last year State Department officials had tried to claim (without producing evidence) that Cuba was involved in the production of biological weapons and was a potential threat to the United States. That just might now be enough to prompt a pre-emptive strike, and if so, they reasoned, they could no longer afford to have dissidents, possibly directed by the United States, roaming free.

The conclusion may reflect a certain paranoia. It seems most unlikely that the United States intends to attack Cuba—though if I were Cuban, I wouldn't be so sure. And my uncertainty would be further stimulated by the warning of the US ambassador to the Dominican Republic on April 10 that what had just happened in Iraq should be an "example" for Cuba.

That aside, Cuba's response was an overreaction of grand magnitude. Initiatives in Congress to ease sanctions against Cuba will now be on hold. And in the eyes of the rest of the world, it turns Cuba into a rogue state—exactly what Cuba should not want if it fears US military action. Rather, it should be burnishing its international reputation and seeking the political support of Europeans, Canadians and others. The massive crackdown makes such support less likely. And there were certainly less dramatic and counterproductive ways to keep an eye on the dissidents. Cuban state security had the whole movement thoroughly penetrated. Many of the witnesses appearing at the trials were other supposed dissidents who turned out to be state security agents!

If the Cuban crackdown ill served Cuban interests, US policy is counterproductive in terms of our own. The best way to bring about a more open society in Cuba is through a reduction of tensions, dialogue and expanded contacts. The old policy of embargo, pressures and efforts to isolate hasn't worked in more than forty years, and the even more aggressive embellishments of the Bush Administration won't work now. The latter have only succeeded in reversing the trend toward greater toleration of dissent—and landed lots of good people in jail. Exactly the reverse of what we should want. WAYNE S. SMITH

Wayne S. Smith, a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington, was chief of the US Interests Section in Havana, 1979–82.

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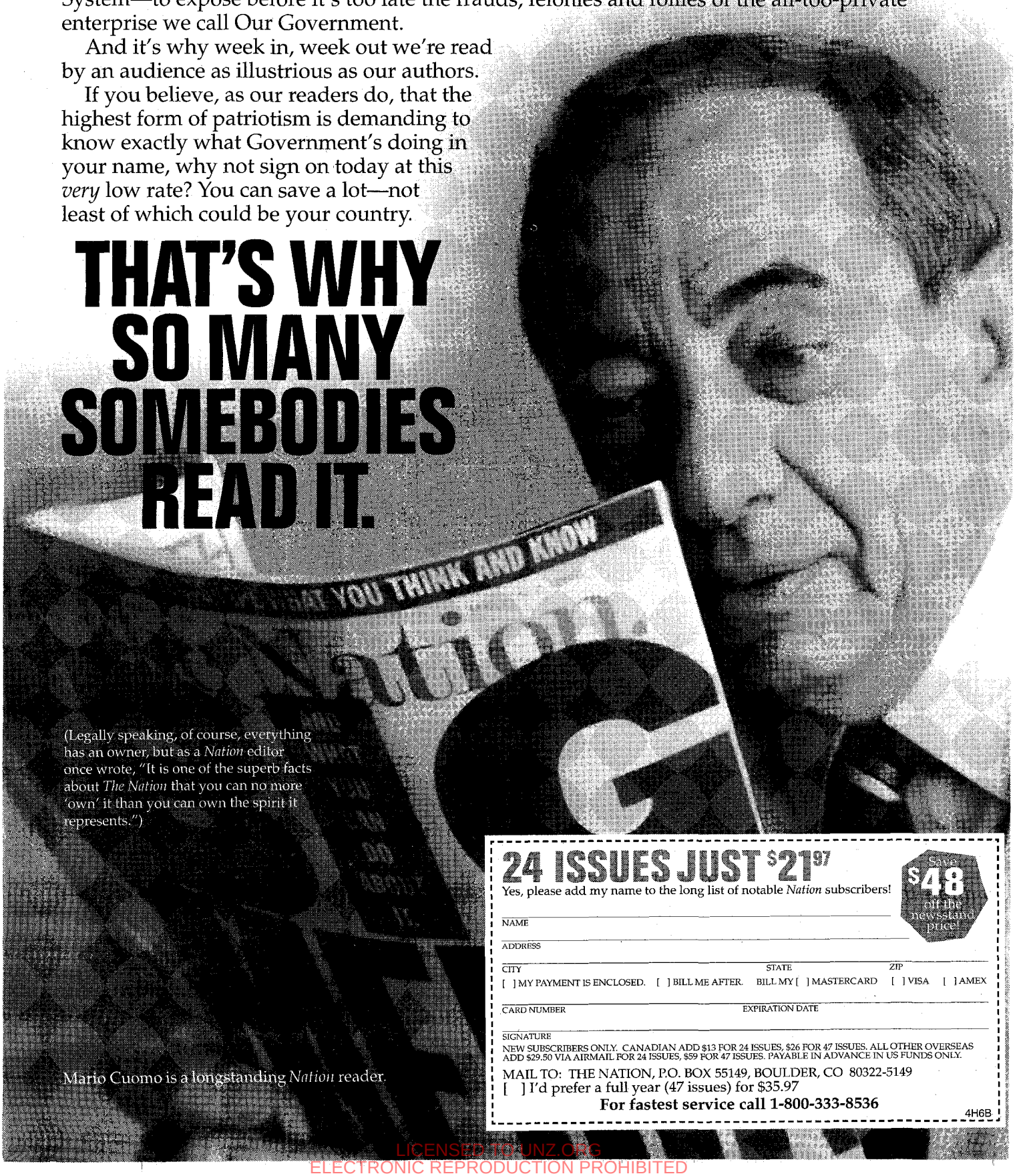

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Fear Eats the Soul

JOHN BERGER

"I think we agree, the past is over." —George W. Bush

Baghdad has fallen. The city has been taken by the troops who were bringing it freedom. Its hospitals are wailingly overcrowded with burnt and maimed civilians, many of them children, and all of them victims of the computerized missiles, shells and bombs launched by the city's liberators. The statues of Saddam Hussein have been destroyed. Meanwhile, in the Pentagon at a press conference, Mr. Secretary Rumsfeld is suggesting that the next country to be "liberated" may be Syria.

Early this morning an e-mail arrived from a friend of mine who is a painter: "The world today is hard to look at, let alone think of." All of us can recognize ourselves in that *cri de coeur*. But let's think.

There are certain moments of looking at a familiar mountain that are unrepeatable. A question of a particular light, an exact temperature, the wind, the season. You could live seven lives and never see the mountain quite like that again; its face is as specific as a momentary glance across a table at breakfast. A mountain stays in the same place, and can almost be considered immortal, but to those who are familiar with the mountain, it never repeats itself. It has another time scale.

Each day and night of the ongoing war in Iraq is different with different griefs, different acts of defiance, different stupidities. It remains, however, the same war, the war that almost everyone in the world perceived, before it began, as an aggression of unprecedented cynicism (the ravine between

John Berger's collection of essays, The Shape of a Book, *was recently published by Pantheon.*

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declared principles and real aims). This war was undertaken not only to seize control of one of the world's richest oil reserves and to test out new weapons like the microwave bomb—weapons of pitiless destruction, many of which were offered to the Pentagon free by the manufacturers seeking substantial contracts for wars to come—but principally and above all to demonstrate to our fragmented but globalized world what "shock and awe" is.

This can be put less rhetorically. The primary aim of the war, launched in defiance of the United Nations, was to demonstrate what is likely to happen to any leader, nation, community or people who persist in refusing to comply with US interests. Many propositions and memos about the vital need for such a demonstration were being discussed in corporate and operational planning circles well before Bush's fraudulent election, and before the terrorist attacks of September 11.

The term "US interests" can lead to confusion here. It does not refer to the direct interest of US citizens, whether poor or well-off, but to the far-reaching interests of the most powerful multinational corporations, often dominated by US capital, and now, when necessary, defended by the American military.

What Rumsfeld, Cheney, Rice, Wolfowitz, Perle and Co. have succeeded in doing since September 11 is to shut down any debate about the legitimacy or ultimate efficacy of such a threatening deployment of power. They have used the fear spawned by the Twin Towers attack to enlist the media and public opinion in support of unilateral, pre-emptive strikes against any target they identify as terrorist. As a result, the world market with its spin is being woven into the Stars and Stripes, and the making of profit (for the few who can) is becoming the only inalienable right.

"Terrorism is the war of the poor, and war is the terrorism of the rich," Peter Ustinov, the actor and playwright, recently observed with succinct clarity.

An equally succinct remark was made by one of Rumsfeld's spokesmen when questioned about the future role of countries that had not joined the coalition, notably France and Germany, in the reconstruction of Iraq when the war is over. "If you haven't joined the club, why should you come to the dinner?"

Although the assertion that Iraq still had weapons of massive destruction was the official justification for the country's invasion, there has perhaps never been a war in which the inequality of firepower between the combatants has been so great. On the one hand, satellite surveillance night and day, B-52s, Tomahawk cruise missiles, cluster bombs, shells with depleted uranium and computerized weapons that are so sophisticated they give rise to the theory (and virtual dream) of a no-contact war; on the other hand, sandbags, elderly men brandishing the pistols of their youth and handfuls of fedayeen, wearing torn shirts and sneakers, armed with a few Kalashnikovs. Many of the conventionally armed troops of the Republican Guard either deserted or were bombed out of existence during the first week. The comparative casualty rates between the Iraqi forces and those of the coalition will almost certainly be, as in "Operation Desert Storm," well over 100 to one.

Baghdad was taken within five days of the land army being given the order to attack. The obligatory destruction of the dictator's hideous statues followed the same pattern; the liberated citizens only had hammers while the US troops assisted with tanks and bulldozers.

The speed of the operation convinced the tame journalists, but not the courageous wild ones, that the invasion was, as promised, a liberation. Might had turned out to be right! Meanwhile, Baghdad's poor, fatally deprived during the twelve-year embargo, started to pillage empty public buildings. The chaos began.

Let us return, now, to the mountain, which proposes another time scale, and observe from there. The victors, with their historically unprecedented superiority of weapons—the victors who were bound to be victors—appeared frightened. Not only the gas-masked Marines, dispatched to a problematic country and undergoing real desert storms, but faraway spokespeople in the comfort of the Pentagon, and, above all, the coalition's national leaders, appearing on TV or conferring, conspiratorially, in out-of-the-way places.

Many of the errors committed during the early stages of the war—soldiers being killed by friendly fire, civilian families being blown to pieces at point-blank range (an operation called "killing the vehicle")—were said to be caused by overnervousness.

Any of us can become terrified at any moment if fear overlays us. The leaders of the New World Order, however, would seem to be married to fear, and their subordinate commanders and sergeants to be indoctrinated from above with something of the same fear.

What are the practices of this marriage? Day and night the partners of fear are anxiously preoccupied with telling themselves

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and their subordinates the right half-truths, half-truths that hope to change the world from what it is into something it is not. It takes about six half-truths to make a lie. As a result, these leaders become unfamiliar with reality, while continuing to dream about and, of course, to exercise power. They continually have to absorb shocks while accelerating. Decisiveness becomes their invariable device for preventing the asking of questions.

Married as they are to fear, they cannot come to terms with, or find a place for, death. Fear keeps death out, and so the dead desert them. And people deserted by the dead lose any sense of continuity. The past becomes obsolete and the future frenetic and short-term. The present is reduced to a sequence of instants, unrelated to the experience of past and future lives. Those deserted by the dead find themselves alone on the planet. Married to fear, deserted by the dead, they still wield incomparable power, both economic and military, and are terrifyingly dangerous. But, in the long run, can their power survive? Ask the dead and the not-yet-born. I doubt it.

On the twenty-third day of the war the chaos increased exponentially. The regime had toppled. Saddam Hussein could not be found. The aerial bombardments continued their havoc wherever Gen. Tommy Franks saw fit. And on the ground in Baghdad and some other liberated cities, everything was being pillaged, stolen, dismembered, not only from deserted ministries but from shops, houses, hotels and even hospitals, to which more and more maimed and dying were being hopelessly carried. Some doctors in Baghdad took up guns to try to defend their services and equipment. Meanwhile, the forces who liberated and traumatized the city stood by, astounded, nervous, doing nothing.

The scenario for the jubilant toppling of the statues was foreseen in the Pentagon and studiously prepared for, because it contained a half-truth. The whole truth of what is happening in the cities was not foreseen. Mr. Secretary Rumsfeld has referred to the chaos as merely an "untidiness."

When one tyranny is overthrown not by its subjects but by another tyranny, the result risks being chaos, because it will seem to the people that the ultimate hope of any social order has been totally destroyed, and then the impulse to seize for personal survival takes over and looting begins. It is as simple and terrible as that. Yet the new tyrants know nothing about how people *in extremis* behave. Their fear stops them from knowing. They are familiar only with half-truths addressed to clients. ■

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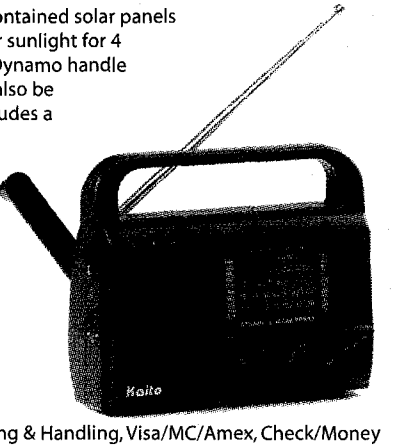

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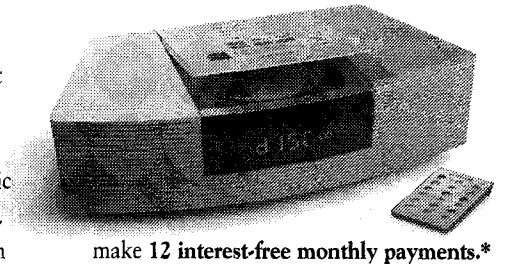

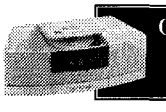

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Minority Report

ALAN JENKINS

TRUTH: Red, White & Black. Written by Robert Morales. Illustrated by Kyle Baker. Marvel Comics. Paper $3.99.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST. Written by Karl Kesel. Penciled by Stuart Immonen. Inked by Scott Koblish. Marvel Comics. Paper $2.25.

RAWHIDE KID: Slap Leather. Written by Ron Zimmerman. Illustrated by John Severin. Marvel Comics/MAX. Paper $2.99.

Ever since Clark Kent first donned a pair of oversized glasses and, somewhat improbably, hid his Superman persona from Lois Lane, questions of identity have been a staple of the comic-book genre. And it is near-gospel that a hero's alter ego is the polar opposite of his or her costumed personality. Beneath the mask, Spider-Man is Peter Parker, a nerdy, pimply-faced teenager. The Incredible Hulk metamorphoses from wilting scientist Bruce Banner into a raging green behemoth. By day, Daredevil is Matt Murdock, a blind, workaholic attorney. So perhaps it should not be surprising that Marvel Comics—creators of Spidey, The Hulk and Daredevil, among others—is taking the theme of identity in new, contemporary directions.

And yet it is surprising. In three new, seemingly unrelated comic-book series, Marvel has begun an exploration of racial, religious and sexual identity that is unique in the mainstream comic-book industry. In a new series titled *Truth: Red, White & Black*, writer Robert Morales and artist Kyle Baker offer a revisionist account of the origins of Captain America—the star-spangled hero who first fought the Nazis in World War II—in which the original hero is recast as a black GI. In *Remembrance of Things Past*, Fantastic Four No. 56 (Vol. 3), writer Karl Kesel and artist Stuart Immonen reveal that the orange, craggy hero known as "The Thing" is Jewish. And in *Slap Leather*, a series by writer Ron Zimmerman and artist John Severin, the Rawhide Kid, a gun-toting cowboy in the Old West, is openly gay. This reinvention of the identities of three major characters in a formerly homogenous corner of the literary (yes, literary) universe deserves a closer look.

Truth, *Remembrance* and *Slap Leather* have all caused a minor firestorm in comic-book land, with fans clogging Internet chatrooms, listservs and conventions with commentary, positive and negative, and the kind of excruciatingly detailed dissection of plot lines that keeps comic collectors up at night. (One Fantastic Four fan wrote in to say that The Thing can't be Jewish because in an issue from the 1970s the hero celebrated Christmas.)

But why all the hubbub over these story lines? Mature and controversial themes are hardly new to comic books. Since the late 1960s, "underground" comics like the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers have dealt with drugs, sex, race and other prickly topics. And in the recent past, a few major characters have even flirted with ethnic transformation. "The Invincible Iron Man" had a brief incarnation as a black man (though "The Invincible" was quietly dropped from his title), and Superman himself briefly had a forgettable black alter ego known as Steel (committed to celluloid in an even more forgettable film of the same name starring Shaquille O'Neal). In those cases, though, readers recognized the ethnic story lines for what they were, temporary deviations from the characters' signature histories and identities. Superman would forever be Clark Kent, the mild-mannered (white, Anglo-Saxon and straight) visitor from the planet Krypton. Iron Man would remain Tony Stark, the billionaire (white, Anglo-Saxon and straight) industrialist and playboy.

But the new story lines represent something different, especially for the comics faithful. They are changing forever the core personal histories and identities of major, beloved characters. More profoundly, they are revealing that the characters were never what readers assumed them to be. In the comic-book world, that kind of change can't be undone. Twenty years after the current series come to an end, experienced collectors at comic-book conventions will be sagely explaining to their wide-eyed protégés that "actually, the first Captain America was black."

Alan Jenkins is director of the Human Rights unit at the Ford Foundation in New York.

Fantastic Four No. 56 (Vol. 3), *Remembrance of Things Past*

In case it has slipped your mind, The Thing began life as Benjamin Jacob Grimm, a poor kid in a New York neighborhood called Yancy Street, curiously reminiscent of the Lower East Side. Though a cosmic space accident transformed him into a giant stone monster circa 1961, Grimm has continued to visit his neighborhood in sporadic episodes over the years. In those books, local toughs taunted the hero for abandoning his urban, streetfighting roots. They heckled and jeered at him, accusing him of being a traitor to his class. But no mention was ever made of The Thing's religion. In *Remembrance of Things Past*, published last August, Ben Grimm makes another trek to the old neighborhood, this time to return a Star of David that he stole as a teenager from a pawnshop owner named Mr. Sheckerberg.

Through a series of flashbacks we learn that young Grimm's father was an alcoholic, his brother Danny a gang leader. Danny died young and violently, and Grimm soon lost both parents as well. He stole the Star of David to prove he had the "stones" to lead the Yancy Street Gang, but was saved from the streets when the City moved him into the home of his affluent uncle. That's when the class war with the Yancys began: "We voted you out when you decided to go live with your fancy uncle—the doctor!" the Gang tells him. "Everyone knows you always wanted off the street, Grimm—become some hotshot pilot!" (There are a lot of exclamation points in comics.)

Back in the present, The Thing shows up in time to defend Mr. Sheckerberg from a superpowered extortionist named "Powderkeg: The Man with the Explosive Aura." ("Okay, maybe not an aura—more like my skin exudes nitroglycerine," explains Powderkeg, "Hate to have you die with any misconceptions!") When The Thing seems to be on the ropes, the Yancy Street Gang comes to his rescue, spraying Powderkeg with mace and pushing him down a sewer hole, but not before the villain wounds the elderly Sheckerberg.

It is here that the authors reveal Ben Grimm's religion. Bending over the fallen Sheckerberg, The Thing prays the traditional "Sh'ma Yisrael," the Hebrew confession at death. Sheckerberg survives and asks Grimm the question on many readers' minds: "All these years in the news, they never mention you're Jewish. I thought maybe you were ashamed of it a little." Grimm explains that, to the contrary, he did not want to bring shame on the Jewish com-

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munity. "Figure there's enough trouble in this world without people thinkin' Jews are all monsters like me." When Grimm tries to return the stolen Star of David, the pawnbroker refuses it, likening Grimm to the Golem—the legendary living statue said to have protected Prague's persecuted Jews. The final word from Powderkeg to The Thing: "It's just...you don't look Jewish."

Beneath the wisecracks and testosterone, *Remembrance of Things Past* is a surprisingly rich tale of religious and class guilt. Grimm feels remorse both over his past as a young hoodlum and over escaping the poverty and hopelessness of his old neighborhood—a stroke of luck that eluded his neighborhood chums. And he keeps his religion a secret because he fears that his frightening appearance will reflect poorly on the Jewish community. What drives him throughout the book is a sense of duty to others, which is what makes him a hero.

Ben Grimm's journey parallels, in some ways, the path of the first generation of comic-book writers, almost all of whom were Jews. In addition to Bob Kane, the creator of Batman, and Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, who gave us Superman, the list includes Stan Lee (born Leiber), a former editor-in-chief of Marvel, and Jack Kirby (born Kurtzberg), who co-created the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man. For all their success, these comic-book pioneers Anglicized their names and hid their religion, at least from readers, for decades. And so, the story's themes of prejudice, guilt and religious identity hold special meaning.

Sheckerberg tries to put The Thing's guilt to rest. "What you learned on the street, what you learned at the synagogue—when you need those things, you can always...get them back," says the old man. "I'm a pawnbroker, Benjamin—this is something I know about." But the poverty of the streets and the bigotry of the public are evils that a superhero is powerless to defeat.

Rawhide Kid: Slap Leather

The Rawhide Kid was a run-of-the-mill western character created in 1955 to capitalize on the popularity of the *Rawhide* TV series. The Kid was a crack shot, but always shy around girls. Fifty years later, we know why. In the new series, he becomes the first openly gay title character in a mainstream comic book.

In Hollywood parlance, *Rawhide Kid: Slap Leather* reads like *Shane* meets *Will and Grace*. The tale is narrated by Toby, the young son of the sheriff of Wells Junction. When the sheriff is humiliated and his deputy killed by Cisco Pike and his gang, all seems lost—until The Kid comes to town and volunteers to help out. Dressed in skintight leather pants and white gloves, The Kid immediately takes the drama down a notch. "Oh, stop," he tells the blubbering sheriff. "It's a few bruises and two bullets. You'll live."

And so it goes. The series is at times hilarious. After the sheriff's first encounter with Pike, he sits down to talk with his son, telling the boy that discussing his feelings will make him feel better. The boy lets fly: "Well, see, I wuz just thinkin' 'bout the shame and humiliation I wuz feelin' while I watched you let your deputy git his brains blowed out, then seein' you git beat like an old rug in front'a all my friends and havin' ta realize that my Paw is nuthin' but a yellowbellied coward and how I gotta run away from home now so's nobody will know I'm yore son.... Hey, I do feel better!" The books contain a number of laugh-out-loud moments that are rare in the superhero genre and almost unheard of in comic-book westerns.

For the most part, though, *Slap Leather* seems a wasted opportunity. Though beautifully illustrated by John Severin, who drew the 1950s Kid books, the series is basically an extended one-liner. By page five,

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the cognitive dissonance of gay double-entendre and contemporary content in a comic book set in the Old West wears thin. At least in the early issues, the series says nothing interesting about sexual identity and offers few laughs that don't derive from tired gay stereotypes.

When Toby and his friends ask The Kid about the Lone Ranger, he gushes: "All I can say is, I don't care which one of us is faster, I just want to meet him. I think that the mask and the powder blue outfit are fantastic. I can certainly see why that Indian follows him around." Asked about Wild Bill Hickok, The Kid takes a puff from an extra-long cigarette holder and retorts, "Very nice man. Bigger than life." This is the stuff of prime-time sitcoms. (Series writer Ron Zimmerman's TV credits include the ill-fated *Michael Richards Show.*) With such a great premise—an openly and proudly gay gunfighter in the Old West—the reader pines for a more nuanced and creative tale. Unfortunately, none is forthcoming, at least early in the series.

Truth: Red, White & Black

By far the most interesting of the new Marvel story lines is *Truth: Red, White & Black*, in which writer Robert Morales and artist Kyle Baker reveal a hidden chronicle in the history of Captain America. In the original series, created in the 1940s, "Cap" was a scrawny blond GI, Steve Rogers, who volunteered for a secret experiment. Military brass and a scientist known as Dr. Reinstein pumped Rogers full of a new "super soldier serum," turning him into a costumed superhero. Cap took on the Axis powers throughout the war, then resurfaced in the 1960s to fight an assortment of supervillains with sinister, fascist leanings.

Truth, a prequel to the original Captain America series, reveals that the US military performed the original supersoldier experiments on African-American GIs who had no choice in the matter. The series follows several black soldiers assigned to Camp Cathcart, Mississippi, at the start of World War II. The men have arrived at the camp for different reasons and from different backgrounds. One is a World War I vet and staff sergeant known in his native Cleveland neighborhood as "Cap." Another is an affluent Philadelphia peace activist given the choice of prison or enlistment. Yet another, Isaiah Bradley, is a Bronx family man with a wife and baby at home.

Racial oppression is a central and pervasive theme of each man's story, and of the tale as a whole. The opening frame finds Bradley and his new wife at the 1940 World's Fair. Though it is "Negro Week," the couple is turned away from a sideshow featuring scantily clad white women. "It's the girls, okay?" explains the hawker. "They don't like being looked at like they're animals." Bradley is ready to fight, but his wife restrains him. The indignities and injustice of the Jim Crow system play an important role in the other men's backstories as well.

Robert Morales has done some impressive historical research, skillfully folding period details into the story line. Canfield, the peace activist, displays the "Double V," a slogan of civil rights activists in the 1940s that linked the struggles against fascism abroad and racism at home. The colored unit is assigned to wash latrines, then harassed by white troops for their stench. Sergeant Evans tells of being busted in rank over a racially motivated incident with a white superior officer. Far from seeming gratuitously didactic, these incidents lay the groundwork, in classic comic-book style, for the government's betrayal of the colored troops later in the series. They establish that the Army, like the nation, viewed blacks as expendable and, therefore, the perfect subjects for a risky military experiment.

In the second and third issues of the series, a military intelligence officer, along with Dr. Reinstein of the original Captain America series, gathers 300 Negro troops into transport trucks for a secret mission. They execute hundreds of others in cold blood, along with the white camp commander. At a secret location, medics inject the naked soldiers with varying doses of the supersoldier serum, killing some and grotesquely deforming others. A few survivors, including the main characters, emerge with highly volatile superpowers. Captain America is (re)born.

In that dramatic turn lies the radical nature of Morales and Baker's undertaking in *Truth*: transforming the benevolent, justice-loving military fathers of the original series into cold-blooded, Machiavellian actors not so different from their fascist enemies. The story line draws its inspiration, and its believability, from the notorious Tuskegee experiments. From the 1930s through the 1970s, the US government measured the effects of untreated syphilis on a group of 400 poor black sharecroppers, intentionally visiting insanity, death and untold suffering on generations of its own people. With its echoes of Tuskegee, the *Truth* series asks and answers the question: If the US military had to test a dangerous new formula on World War II GIs, would it experiment on blond, blue-eyed Steve Rogers, or anonymous African-Americans like Canfield, Evans and Bradley?

Of the three Marvel series reviewed here, *Truth* has received the most attention from comic-book aficionados and the mainstream media, and deservedly so. By comic industry standards, the original *Captain America* is no slouch; he's been around for more than sixty years and, in 2002, was the tenth-bestselling comic book in the United States. Though the hero has never enjoyed the name recognition of a Superman or the selling power of a Spider-Man, the symbolism of reinventing this particular hero in this particular way is powerful. He is, after all, Captain *America*. Even for those who've never read a comic book and couldn't pick him out of a hero lineup, the name connotes patriotism and wholesome virtue. The character was created at a time when comic books were a powerful form of kiddie propaganda, the epitome of moral clarity, bloodless violence and racial purity. But, as *Truth* reminds us, it was also a time of rigid segregation, virulent racism and legal oppression, in which the US military was an active co-conspirator.

Truth not only brings that history to today's young (and not so young) comic-book readers; it argues that America's racist legacy reaches into the present. No matter how virtuous and egalitarian the modern Captain America is, he owes his powers, and his legacy, to the death and suffering of African-American GIs a half-century ago. America too, the book suggests, owes a debt to these martyrs. "These guys were sacrificed to create and shore up the whole 'Captain America' myth," Morales, the author, said recently.

This is heavy stuff, especially at a time of immigrant detention and "special registration" in the wake of September 11, 2001. In fact, an episode of the modern (white) Captain America that accompanies the first issue of *Truth* finds Steve Rogers poring through the tragic rubble of the World Trade Center attacks in search of victims. Later that day, dressed as Captain America, he stops a man who has lost his daughter in the attacks from stabbing an innocent Arab-American in revenge. "We've got to be stronger than we've ever been," says Cap. "As a people. As a nation. We have to be America. Or they've won." Seven months later, he's off to fight terrorists. Real terrorists. Not your father's comic book. ■

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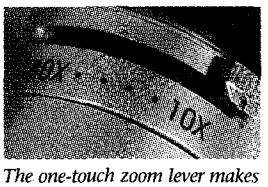

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The Revell Variations

STEPHEN BURT

MY MOJAVE. By Donald Revell. Alice James Books. 67 pp. $13.95.

How much, in just twenty years, Donald Revell has changed! *From the Abandoned Cities* (1983), his debut volume, included a villanelle, a sestina, rhymed sonnets and meditative terza rima. The book evoked bleak cityscapes from the Bronx to Belfast, where "sadness clings to the round/like fog." Revell's grim descriptions both depicted and feared "the collapse of life/into signs and tokens." By *New Dark Ages* (1990) that collapse had taken place, and Revell's landscapes had become wistful allegories or bitter, almost solipsistic dreamscapes. "All are private and seek even more privacy," Revell decided, writing elsewhere:

> The stores will never open again. For
> the rest of our lives
> we shall make constellations and gods
> out of the guts of buildings and the
> stale damp.

Erasures (1992) and *Beautiful Shirt* (1994) moved even further from specifics, describing erotic, political and intellectual frustration, and mingling plangency, difficulty and self-pity:

> Why have I chosen privacy over full-
> ness?
> Why have I chosen the strait, unmutual
> loving of a small man whose heart is
> secrecy
> and whose citizenship only that of the
> reformed transient in the waste places
> he fills from himself alone?

There Are Three (1998) showed Revell at his most austere. In poems like "Elegy," even syntax became a human connection Revell refused:

> myself the other
> winter even more
> myself the other
> still as obscure
> a milk white one
> a coal black one
> winter even more

For all his stylistic shifts, however, Revell's moods and properties had not altered, nor had his limited palette of diction, all gray and restrained blue-gray. When regions or landscapes appeared, they evoked, as one title put it, "The Memory of New England." When the poetic "I" acted, it acted alone.

Arcady (2002) grew entirely (its preface said) from Revell's grief for his lately dead sister. A book-length pastoral elegy, achingly conscious of Renaissance precedents, the volume made the terseness and the brief nonstatements Revell tried out in *Three* into visionary vehicles, opening up spaces where Revell could demonstrate, haltingly, just how he felt:

> In the country in dream in Arcady
> One sentenced to death was given
> wings
> I do not want to die

Arcady pursued attempts at otherworldliness, some of them bordering on religious faith. It hoped, or tried, to believe in another world, one in which his late sister might remain:

> To dream like this
> Was worth the trouble
> Getting here
>
> My other ideas
> Seem premature
> Like ghosts now
>
> The most beautiful star
> Is crossing me

These thin lines and cryptic inscriptions owed something, perhaps, to Revell's translations of Apollinaire, and something to the younger poets he encountered as an editor and a teacher (at the University of Denver and at Utah, where he teaches now). Interviewed about *Arcady*, Revell said disarmingly that in his "earlier work I wanted to win an audience and an audience's approval, its admiration. And I did my circus tricks accordingly." In his pastoral elegy, by contrast, he had tried to "go alone to the alone." Yet *Arcady* resembled his first books in its depiction of a difficult solitude: The pastoral postmodern swain, exploring his American visions, remained bereft in

Stephen Burt, who teaches at Macalester College in St. Paul, is the author of a book of poems, Popular Music *(Colorado).*

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a limited landscape of symbolic nouns—wind, river, grass, shadow, ax, grave.

By contrast with *Arcady*, *My Mojave* appears expansive, welcoming, easily grasped. By contrast with *Three* or *Erasures*, it sounds, at first, like the work of an entirely different man. Revell now seeks a poetry appropriate not only to loneliness but to anger and happiness, not only to freighted symbols but to facts, not only to doubt but to faith. What's more, he seems to have found what he seeks. For the first time since the 1980s, Revell organizes poems around proper nouns—Andrew Marvell, Christmas, the Fourth of July, his wife (the poet Claudia Keelan), his playful young son and their new Nevada home ("the 900 block of Fairchild"), and even the 2000 presidential election. Here, entire, is "To the Destroyers of Ballots," perhaps the first good poem about that bad day:

For his cancer
My dog drinks
A wild tea
Of fallen leaves
In standing water

But this morning
We found ice
And underneath it
Nothing to drink
Only brittle leaves

No birds today
Except hawks keeping
A brown watch
Over no prey
Man and dog

Revell has not lost his attraction to modes of austerity, of meaning as much while stating as little as possible. Yet readers of Revell's past books will notice not this political lyric's anxiety, nor its careful allegory (dog=voters, tea=imperfect democracy, no tea=stolen election) but instead its stark lucidity, its openness to purely observed detail.

My Mojave presents itself as a book about that new openness, its clarity as a new, hopeful state of mind. "Pandemonium" opens by quoting Milton, thus painting two parents (perhaps Revell and Keelan, perhaps Keelan's parents) as Adam and Eve:

Some natural tears they dropped,
Especially on the 900 block of Fairchild
Where a bicycle leans against a broken
Aphrodite
On porch-steps.

Behind them it was a jumble
Coming into flower and brown fences
Breaking like waves at all angles
And rooftops at all angles.

A sustained applause, and heartfelt,
Began only when they had gone.

Revell depicts people and dwellings, but withholds their story: Do the parents enjoy their departure, or the neighbors applaud their leaving? He leaves us instead with a very broad range of language, from the Miltonic to the American-demotic; with a characteristic Revellian music (six of ten lines concluding on unstressed syllables, all line breaks coinciding with grammatical pauses, all except the last hesitant); and especially with a sense of mystery, one these departing parents might themselves feel.

In Revell's new world, any experience—even at 900 Fairchild—could become hieratic at any time. "Pandemonium" therefore seems to him a surprisingly friendly place, inhabited by who knows how many spirits: the neighbors, or "a postman," or "Reverend Fate,/Interim pastor of Main Street Congregational," whose "sermons/Are shirts for my pillow, my dream sermons." Any stone, shirt or scrap in Revell's field of vision can

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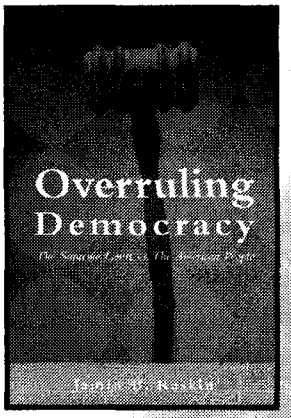

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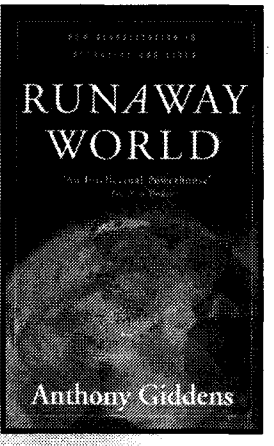

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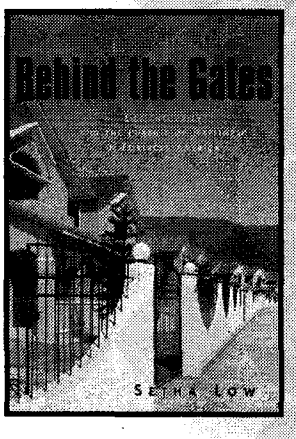

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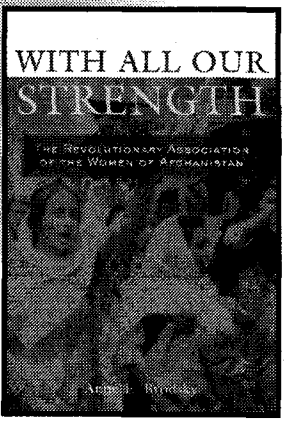

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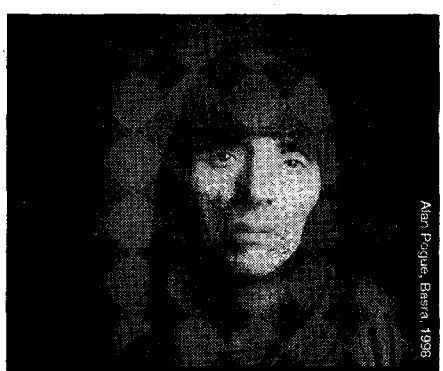

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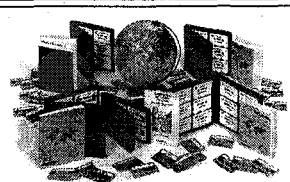
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prompt a laconic generality of its own: In "My Trip," for example, "A silver fish head glistens beside a bottlecap. / Plenty remains." Here Revell sounds like James Wright, or like other poets from the 1960s and '70s who told us to trust the luminous details that prove to us that "This is really the world." When Revell's 1990s poems failed, they didn't make sense; when his new poems fail, they make too much sense, or rather avoid sense via hippie clichés: "Sometimes books / Are true because of rain."

Mostly, though, Revell achieves all the originality, and all the obliquity, his lines need. Revell generalizes wherever he can, then pours in more information, taking (as he says) "instruction from accident"; poems interrupt themselves to give sights and dates ("October 20, 2000 Iowa City"), which then dissolve into Revell's abstracting and attenuating temperament, like sugar into hot water. That temperament prompts, in his descriptive poems, an enticingly diffident self-subtraction: Revell attempts to describe, and to accept, a changeable world by never asking more from it than it can give. The attractively brief "Counsel" sketches a Buddha that "Floats in marigolds / Until the August heat / Kills them," then decides that "True grief is endless / As happiness / Is unforgettable." The much longer title poem also mixes description with abstraction, resignation with metaphysical delight:

> ...I could say
> Shadows and mirage
> Compensate the world,
> Completing its changes
> With no change.

Without caesuras, sometimes without punctuation, Revell's lines (like W.S. Merwin's, like Michael Palmer's) try to sound effortless, and to leave readers breathless; Revell's desire for open-endedness, and his attraction to grammatical ambiguities, play productively against his desire for poems with beautifully quotable parts. "Harvest" makes a good example; it ends:

> Aversion then compulsion then
> Children exchange childish blood
> For coronets grown with God
> It is cool enough to breathe now
> It is autumn for the taking

Are the coronets (signs of martyrdom) grown with God, or does God make it cool enough to breathe? Who feels averse, then compelled—the children? Their parents? Revell wants to be sure we do not know, just as he wants, more generally, to demonstrate that propositional knowledge and logic, for him, will never suffice.

What will suffice? Apparently, Christian belief. "This is the miracle of Christmas," Revell wrote in *New Dark Ages*: "for one day, everyone in the world is a puppet." That ambivalence, and that remove, give way here to ingenuous declarations like "I'm not needed / Like wings in a storm / And God is the storm," or "It's no effort / To sing the hymns ourselves, and we do that." "In Christmas," opens with a vision of socio-economic apocalypse: "I saw the mountains burning up and the rubbish / And the people trampling over their own food." Where his early political poetry was vaguely Marxist in inspiration, with echoes of Adorno, Revell now writes what we might call (in praise or blame) a poetry of mystical Christian socialism, in which even the least specific political statements find transcendental sanction if and only if they prove unselfishly "accurate" as art:

> Start right now
> If you are a twig
> Start now
> Protest
> Skins and skins of death
> Offer you
> Our life it is what we fight for
> With sun
> The only stain in it
> Taking out pain which was not accurate...
>
> We are a protest
> Raised against ourselves
> And God comes now
> And God is alone in a leaf
> And we are snow in the desert
> Making a new sound

Revell's early books sent us hunting for parallels in John Ashbery; these passages send us instead to the Psalms, to Isaiah ("Sing unto the Lord a new song") and to Romans 7: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

It may be that much of *My Mojave* reacts covertly to September 11, though the book as a whole seems more informed by the political deadlock that preceded it, and by Revell's family life. Revell reacts to 9/11 explicitly in the verse-diary "Given Days," which deflects or displaces the statements we might expect:

> The attacks were tall, and then they burned.
> I'd been reading, and then it was time
> To take my son to school before the mustangs

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As they do every day, fled
The schoolyard for quieter fields up
high.

"Attacks...burned" (not buildings), mustangs fled (not shocked New Yorkers); implied or deleted words haunt these phrases, much as low-grade survivor's guilt may haunt Revell's everyday acts. Yet this guilt seems to him only a special case of the guilt he experiences, all the time, anyway: "I go out and I feel that every step of mine/Spoils the rime across the grass." Revell believes (as he always has) that to be merely one person, in one place at one historical moment, is to be deeply unsatisfied, but he can now imagine, for the first time, sources of satisfaction—some domestic, others explicitly religious:

Lord dear Governor God
The elections come very near now
And still in the heavy leaf fall
And on all the pretty young people
Walking avenues of the deep color
I conjure more precise obscenities
Cruelties really sad as all liberty
Is sad without worship

Such lines face—even celebrate—the apparent conflict between Revell's new interest in things he can see, and his longtime drive toward subjects abstract, transcendental or invisible. "Halfway to Jehovah," Revell wants to convince us, or to convince himself, that "reality" (his word) is neither inherently cruel, nor hard to understand, nor socially molded, but capable of direct apprehension, if we only open our eyes. Yet that apprehension requires us to forswear some other (more ambitious, more worldly or more sociable) way of life. "The beauties of the world advertise its poisons," and any beauty becomes, for Revell, a poison if we subject it too closely to reason: "Telling is selling,/Even just two letters,/Very different from two birds."

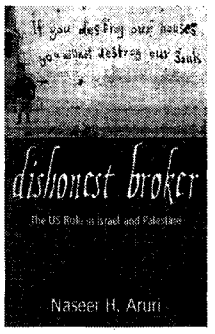
But if Revell now dislikes discursive explanations, he also dislikes poems that ignore the problems human beings have tried to explain—especially the problem of evil:

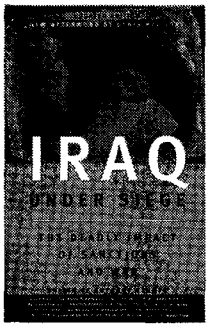
Who am I to be seen without shouting?
What use is knowledge disappearing
down a hole?
Come out and be killed, poem says.
You'll find company. Three ash trees
I saw beside a lake in late October.
One was bare. One was flame-red. The
third
Smoldered still in summer green, and
it was screaming.

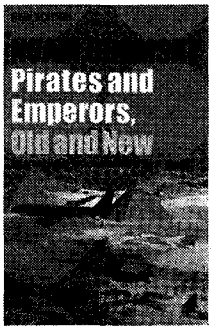
The trio of trees gives Revell a Nevada Golgotha: For all their moments of confidence, the strongest of these new poems come not to send peace, but a sword.

Readers who miss his earlier, slippery work—or who object to Revell's suspicion of the intellect—remain free to take up their own swords against his new style. They might do better to ask what states of mind its vaunting transparencies, and those alone, can describe. Revell wrote in *New Dark Ages*: "How badly I would like to sleep now/in the shadows beside real things or beside/things that were real once." Such stark, existential loneliness underlay the desolate tones of Revell's early work, and impelled the thin, resolutely inward language of his 1990s books, each of which sought new forms for almost the same feelings.

Now, however, the feelings themselves have changed: The solipsism has gone, replaced by a confidence in domestic life, in "real things" outdoors and, at least sometimes, in a Christian God. America looks, to Revell, far worse, and Revell's own private life far better, than either did when Revell began to write; his new poetry of prophetic statement sounds just as strange, just as rich in implication, as anything he—or almost any other poet of his generation—has done. ■







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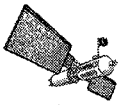

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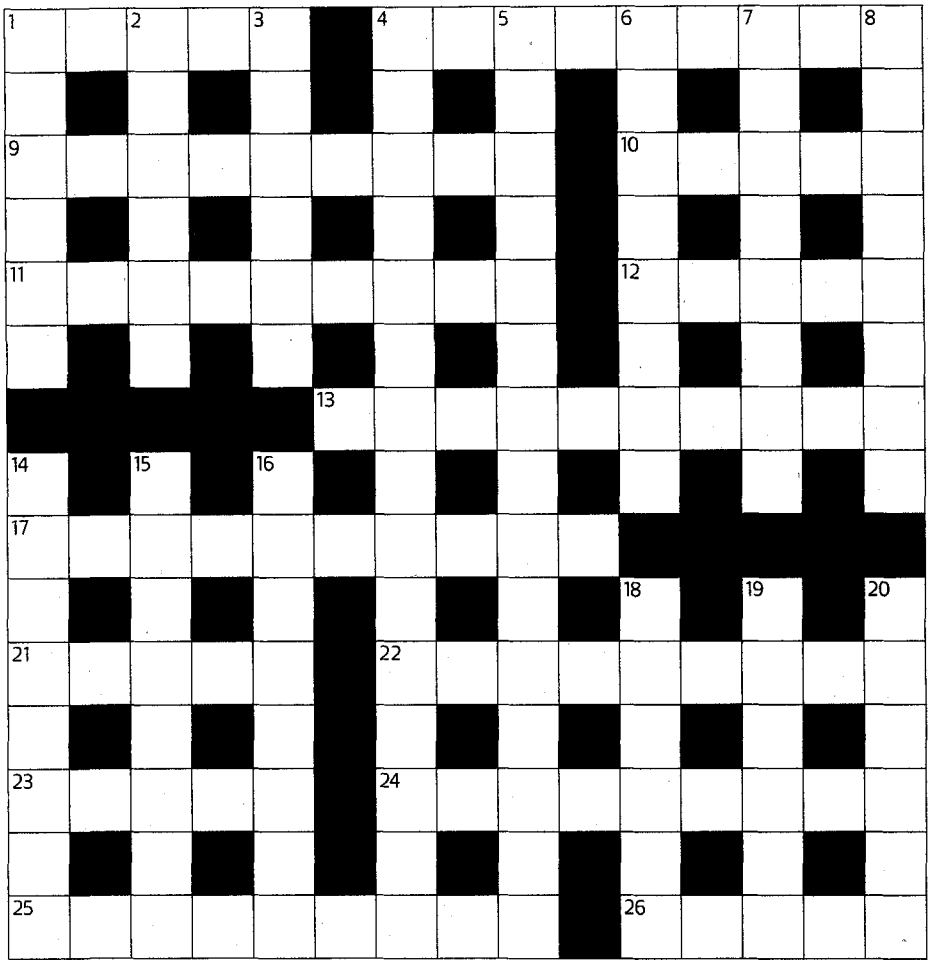

ACROSS

1 A tuber comes back to make a comeback! (5)

4 Certain to be surrounded by what the car owner carefully measures—but such things are highly valued. (9)

9 A long distance when we have a British designation in it, to get to town. (9)

10 Copying what you don't want in your motor? (5)

11 Is the meal ready, or just the service? (6,3)

12 See 25

13 Not real pictures, conditionally here in Paris with a head learner. (10)

17 A Boston musical version with a wild Celtic display fit to describe such condition. (10)

21 Not proper roles for anyone other than a winner. (5)

22 Not interesting compared to the sort of study where you lose your head. (3,2,4)

23 Oh, even Mr. Lincoln was shaken up in it, as if by magic. (5)

24 Din? On the contrary, I err badly on a curve! (9)

25 and **12** A stick in the mud might take advantage of it. (4-5,5)

26 If you don't like it hot, this may go on top. (5)

DOWN

1 My reed is broken, but this could be the cure. (6)

2 What joiners do—though the optimistic say it won't. (6)

3 Stared rather awkwardly at such things as plumbing and carpentry, and possibly swaps something for it. (6)

4 Has the right of way, and chooses to go first. (5,10)

5 A current expense, in more than one way. (Add a T square to put William in office from Troy, Schenectady and Albany!) (11,4)

6 Acts for somebody, to put up with evildoing. (6,2)

7 Knows trouble, one hears. (8)

8 Behaving like Fido this way—in the manner of a plugger. (8)

14 Certainly not on Easy Street, where a lad and a boy mix it up with a very loud conclusion. (5,3)

15 Proving a writer can get to use a sour mixture. (8)

16 A light verse form about a famous person, as a sort of relic to hack away at. (8)

18 A light covering for the chest, which makes for an awful thirst. (1-5)

19 The conductor or the motorman may ask for it. (4-2)

20 What a state to be in, with just a tiny bit to eat—possibly of honey. (1,5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, *The Nation*, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/print/hints.

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C	■	W	■	A	■	U	■	A	■	N	■	S	■	A
H	A	I	R	N	E	T	■	R	O	O	S	T	E	R
I	■	S	■	D	■	C	■	W	■	T	■	O	■	K
P	A	T	H	O	L	O	G	I	C	A	L	L	Y	■
P	■	E	■	N	■	M	■	G	■	R	■	A	■	Y
E	A	R	L	O	B	E	S	■	B	I	S	T	R	O
R	■	■	■	N	■	■	■	■	■	E	■	■	■	U
K	E	E	P	E	R	■	W	H	I	S	T	L	E	R
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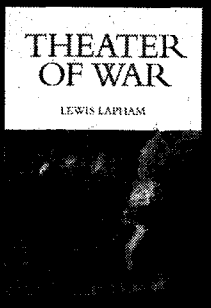

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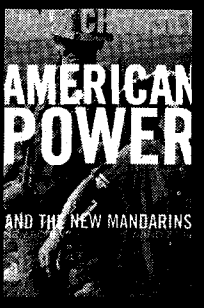

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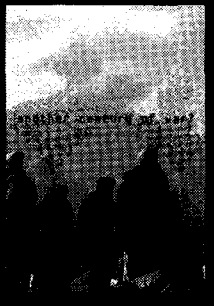

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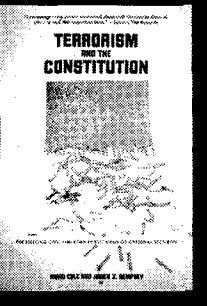

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